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MODERN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AN ANTHOLOGY

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MODERN TRAVEL (The Scholar's Library)

# MODERN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

## AN ANTHOLOGY

Selected and Edited by  
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## PREFACE

Little need be said by way of preface to an anthology such as this, though a brief indication of the principles and considerations that have guided me in my selection may not be out of place. I have thought it preferable to print a few extracts of a fair length rather than a large number of shorter ones. Thus each of the fourteen passages, though part of a larger whole, is, for all practical purposes, complete in itself. Secondly, I have placed a wide interpretation upon the term "autobiography," to include memoirs, reminiscences and similar kinds of writing in which the personal motive predominates. In the third place, an attempt has been made to select from the very wide field thus opened up material which is not only interesting in itself but can also lay claim to literary merit without being too academic or pedantic. And finally, I have endeavoured to secure as great a variety as possible. Only some five or six of the writers are men or women of letters in the more conventional and generally accepted sense of the term, and even they have very different kinds of tales to tell. For the rest there are characters so diverse as a war correspondent who later became a Prime Minister, a tramp, an airman, a lady of leisure, a taxi driver, a farm labourer and a hospital nurse.

Autobiography is probably the most intimate and personal of all forms of writing. It is by no means, as one might suppose, the easiest, for it takes a great deal of talent to recapture some moment or some episode of one's past life, or to recall one's past experiences, re-create them, and make them live in print for the reader. The egotist is seldom a good autobiographer, for things that seem supremely interesting and important to the writer may appear quite trivial and flat to other people. There

## PREFACE

are probably more failures or partial failures amongst autobiographies than amongst thrillers or detective stories. Nevertheless, many really good works of this kind have been produced of recent years, and the present selection is meant to provide an introduction to some of them.

FREDERICK T. WOOD

SHEFFIELD  
*February 1946*

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## A NIGHT RIDE

AT this place I remained several weeks, watching the smiling Spring, which had already taken possession of the air and made the skies blue—unloosing the icy fingers of Winter, which still held the earth down under a thick cover of snow. What a glorious time of the year is this ! With the warm sun travelling through serene skies, the air clear and fresh above you, which instils new blood in the body, making one defiantly tramp the earth, kicking the snows aside in the scorn of action. The cheeks glow with health, the lips smile, and there is no careworn face seen, save they come out of the house of sickness or death. And that lean spectre called Hunger has never been known to appear in these parts. If it was for one moment supposed that such a spectre possessed a house in this country, kind hearts would at once storm the place with such an abundance of good things that the spectre's victim would need to exert great care and power of will, if he would not succumb to an overloaded stomach. This spectre is often seen in the overcrowded cities of Europe, and one of its favourite haunts is the Thames Embankment, in front of the fine hotels where ambassadors and millionaires dine sumptuously. Where they sit or stand at their windows watching the many lights of the city, and to see the moon dipping her silver pitcher in the dark river, and they swear, by Jove ! it is worth seeing. But they cannot see this spectre of Hunger, moving slowly, and sometimes painfully, from shadow to shadow, shivering and anxious for the sun, for they have no other fire to sit before, to make their dreams of the past pleasant.

I remained three weeks in this inexpensive hotel, and decided to travel on the following Monday, although the snow was still deep in Montreal, and would be yet deeper



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in the country. I had a small room for sleeping purposes, at a cost of fifteen cents per night. There were several others of the same kind, each divided one from the other by a thin wooden partition, which was high enough for privacy, but did not prevent curious lodgers from standing tiptoe on their beds, and peering into another's room. Going to bed early on Sunday night, previous to continuing my journey on the following day, I was somewhat startled on entering my room to hear a gentle rap on the partition which divided my room from the next. "Hallo!" I cried, "what do you want?" The man's wants, it seemed, were private, for he seemed frightened into silence at this loud tone of demand, which would most certainly draw the attention of others. At last he cleared his throat by a forced fit of coughing, and then whispered, in a low distinct voice, "I want a match, if you can oblige me with one." Of course, smoking was not allowed in the bedrooms, but in this respect we were nearly all breakers of the law. Taking a few matches from my pocket, I threw them over the partition, and heard him feeling in the semi-darkness, after hearing the sound of them falling. Then he gently struck one, and, by its light, gathered in the others. In a moment or two he addressed me in his natural voice, and, to my surprise, it sounded familiar, and filled me with curiosity to see this man's face. I encouraged him to talk—which he seemed determined to do—thinking a word might reveal him to me, and the circumstances under which we had met.

His voice in the dark puzzled me, and I could not for my life locate it. A hundred scenes passed through my memory, some of them containing a number of characters. In my fancy I made them all speak to me, before dismissing them again to the dim regions from which they had been summoned, but not one of their voices corresponded with this voice heard in the dark. Above this voice I placed thin and thick moustaches, black, grey,

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brown, red and white ; under this voice I put heavy and light beards of various hues, and still, out of all my material, failed to make a familiar face. Still sending Memory forth in quest of the owner of this voice, and she, poor thing ! bringing forward smiling men and stern men, thin men and fat men, short men and tall men, tame men and wild men, hairy men and bald men, dark men and fair men—until she became so confused as to bring back the same people the second time ; still sending her forth on this vain quest, I fell asleep.

It was a dreamless sleep ; no sound broke its stillness, and no face looked into its depths ; and when I awoke the next morning, this voice seemed to be already in possession of my thoughts. I lay awake for about ten minutes, and was just on the point of rising, thinking the man had left his chamber, when I heard a stir coming from that direction. He was now dressing. Following his example, but with more haste, so as to be the first ready, I waited the unbolting of his door, so that I might meet this man face to face. I unbolted my own door, and opened it when I was half dressed, but there was no necessity for doing this, for my arms were in the sleeves of my coat when his bolt was slipped back, and we simultaneously appeared, at the same time wishing each other good-morning. I recognised this man without difficulty, but apparently had the advantage of him. To make no mistake, I looked at his right hand, and saw the two fingers missing, knowing him for a certainty to be Three Fingered Jack, who had been a cattleman from Montreal, whom I had met in Glasgow when I had gone there from Baltimore, three years previous to this. On that occasion I had been in this man's company for only half an hour, and since that time had heard thousands of voices, but was still positive that I had heard this voice before.

We stood side by side washing and preparing for breakfast, and, although I remained a stranger to him,

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as far as former acquaintance was concerned, I mentioned to him in confidence that I was going west that very morning, after breakfast. "So was I," he said, "as far as Winnipeg, but thought to wait until some of this snow cleared. Anyhow, as a day or two makes little difference, we will, if you are agreeable, start together this morning. I know the country well," he continued, "between Montreal and Winnipeg, having travelled it a number of times, and, I promise you, nothing shall be wanting on the way."

This man had lost his two fingers at work in the cotton mills, some ten years before, and ever since then had been living in idleness, with the exception of two or three trips he had made as a cattleman. Certainly he lived well on the kindness of these people, as any able-bodied man might do in this country, without being in any way afflicted. Though he was going to Winnipeg, he was in no hurry, had no object in view, and had not the least idea of where that town would lead him, and he soon tired of one place.

Three Fingered Jack was a slow traveller for as he with some emotion said—"It broke his heart to hurry and pass through good towns whose inhabitants were all the happier for being called on by needy men." This slow travelling suited me for the time being, for we were having another fall of snow, and I half regretted having left Montreal, although day after day I was certainly getting a little nearer to the gold of Klondyke. But I determined to shake off this slow companion on the first approach of fine weather.

We loafed all day in the different railway stations, in each of which was kept a warm comfortable room for the convenience of passengers. Although we were passengers of another sort, and stole rides on the trains without a fraction of payment to the company, we boldly made ourselves at home in these places, being mistaken for respectable travellers who were enjoying the comforts

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for which we paid. Sometimes a station-master would look hard on us, suspecting us for what we were, but he was very diffident about risking a question, however much he was displeased at seeing us in comfortable possession of the seats nearest to the stoves. Towards evening we made application for lodgings at the local jail, at which place we would be accommodated until the following morning. I was now without money, with the exception of that which was concealed and reserved for the most hazardous part of the journey, which would be its western end. Now, in all these jails we were searched and examined before being admitted for a night's shelter, but often in a very indifferent manner. One night we arrived at a small town where a double hanging was to take place in the yard of the jail early the next morning. A woman, it seems, had called on her lover to assist in the murder of her husband, which had been brutally done with an axe, for which crime both had been pronounced guilty and condemned to die. Thousands of people had flocked in from the neighbouring country, which in this province of Ontario was thickly settled, and a large number of plain-clothes detectives had been despatched from the cities, there being supposed some attempt might be made at rescue, owing to one of the condemned being a woman. We arrived at this town early in the afternoon, and were surprised at the unusual bustle and the many groups of people assembled in the main thoroughfares. Thinking the town contained, or expected, some attraction in the way of a circus or menagerie, we expressed little curiosity, but returned at once to the railway station, intending to possess its most comfortable seats against all comers, until the approach of darkness, when we would then make application at the jail for our night's accommodation. When this time came we marched straight to the jail and boldly hammered its door for admittance. It was at once answered by a police officer, to whom we explained our

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wants, and he, without much ado, invited us indoors. Expecting the usual questions, and being prepared with the usual answers—expecting the usual indifferent search, and having pipe, tobacco and matches artfully concealed in our stockings—we were somewhat taken by surprise to find a large number of officers, who all seemed to show an uncommon interest in our appearance. The officer, who was examining us previous to making us comfortable for the night, had finished this part of the business to his own satisfaction, when one of these detectives stepped forward and said—“We cannot admit strangers to the jail on the present occasion, so that you had better make them out an order for the hotel.” This order was then given to us, and we immediately left the jail ; and it was then, curious to know the reason for this action, that we soon made ourselves acquainted with the true facts of the case. When we arrived at the hotel, we were informed that every bed had been taken since morning, and that, as it was, a number of men would be compelled to sit all night dozing in their chairs, and it was with this information we returned to the jail. For the second time we were admitted, and were advised to walk to the next town. This Three Fingered Jack absolutely refused to do, saying his feet were too blistered and sore to carry him another hundred yards. All these detectives then got together, and, after a rather lengthy consultation, one of them came forward and, after plying us with a number of questions, proceeded to examine our clothes, and that so thoroughly that I feared for the result. At the beginning of the search I gave him my razor, a small penknife, my pocket-handkerchief and a comb, but he was not satisfied until his hands were down in my stockings, and bringing up first my pipe, then my tobacco, and lastly the matches. What worried me most was the belt next my body, which contained my money. I had not much fear of Three Fingered Jack, when con-

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fronting each other openly, though he was a tall active man, but had he known of these dollars, I had not dared in his presence to have closed my eyes, believing that he would have battered out my brains with a stone, wooden stake or iron bar, so that he might possess himself of this amount. This detective certainly discovered the belt, and felt it carefully, but the money being in paper, and no coin or hard substance being therein, he apparently was none the wiser for its contents. At last this severe examination was at an end, and we were both led through an iron corridor and placed in a cell, the door of which was carefully locked. I don't believe we slept one moment during that night but what we were overlooked by a pair, or several pairs, of shrewd eyes. They could not believe but that we were other than what we pretended and had come there with designs to thwart the ends of justice. Next morning our things were returned to us, and we were turned adrift at a cold hour that was far earlier than on ordinary occasions.

The snow was still deep and the mornings and evenings cold when, a week after this, we reached Ottawa. This slow travelling was not at all to my liking, and I often persuaded my companion to make more haste towards Winnipeg. This he agreed to do ; so the next morning we jumped a freight train, determined to hold it for the whole day. Unfortunately it was simply a local train, and being very slow, having to stop on the way at every insignificant little station, we left it, at a town called Renfrew, intending that night to beat a fast overland passenger train, which would convey us four or five hundred miles before daybreak. With this object we sat in the station's waiting-room until evening, and then, some twenty minutes before the train became due, we slipped out unobserved and took possession of an empty car, stationary some distance away, from which place we could see the train coming, and yet be unseen from the station's platform. This train would soon arrive, for

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passengers were already pacing the platform, the luggage was placed in readiness, and a number of curious people, having nothing else to do, had assembled here to see the coming and going of the train. At last we heard its whistle, and, looking out, we saw the headlight in the distance, drawing nearer and nearer. It steamed into the station without making much noise, for the rails were slippery, there still being much ice and snow on the track. "Come," I said to Jack, "there is no time to lose"; and we quickly jumped out of the empty car.

This fast passenger train carried a blind baggage car, which means that the end nearest to the engine was blind in having no door. Our object was to suddenly appear from a hiding-place, darkness being favourable, and leap on the step of this car, and from that place to the platform; this being done when the train was in motion, knowing that the conductor, who was always on the watch for such doings, rarely stopped the train to put men off, even when sure of their presence. If he saw us before the train started, he would certainly take means to prevent us from riding. When we had once taken possession of this car, no man could approach us until we reached the next stopping place, which would probably be fifty miles, or much more. At that place we would dismount, conceal ourselves, and, when it was again in motion, make another leap for our former place. Of course the engineer and fireman could reach us, but these men were always indifferent, and never interfered, their business being ahead instead of behind the engine.

The train whistled almost before we were ready, and pulled slowly out of the station. I allowed my companion the advantage of being the first to jump, owing to his maimed hand. The train was now going faster and faster, and we were forced to keep pace with it. Making a leap, he caught the handle-bar and sprang lightly on the step, after which my hand quickly took possession of this bar, and I ran with the train, prepared to follow his

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example. To my surprise, instead of at once taking his place on the platform, my companion stood thoughtlessly irresolute on the step, leaving me no room to make the attempt. But I still held to the bar, though the train was now going so fast that I found great difficulty in keeping step with it. I shouted to him to clear the step. This he proceeded to do, very deliberately, I thought. Taking a firmer grip on the bar, I jumped, but it was too late, for the train was now going at a rapid rate. My foot came short of the step, and I fell, and, still clinging to the handle-bar, was dragged several yards before I relinquished my hold. And there I lay for several minutes, feeling a little shaken, whilst the train passed swiftly on into the darkness.

Even then I did not know what had happened, for I attempted to stand, but found that something had happened to prevent me from doing this. Sitting down in an upright position, I then began to examine myself, and now found that the right foot was severed from the ankle. This discovery did not shock me so much as the thoughts which quickly followed. For, as I could feel no pain, I did not know but what my body was in several parts, and I was not satisfied until I had examined every portion of it. Seeing a man crossing the track, I shouted to him for assistance. He looked in one direction and another, not seeing me in the darkness, and was going his way when I shouted again. This time he looked full my way, but instead of coming nearer, he made one bound in the air, nearly fell, scrambled to his feet, and was off like a shot from a gun. This man was sought after for several weeks, by people curious to know who he was, but was never found, and no man came forward to say—"I am he." Having failed to find this man, people at last began to think I was under a ghostly impression. Probably that was the other man's impression, for who ever saw Pity make the same speed as Fear?



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Another man, after this, approached, who was a workman on the line, and at the sound of my voice he seemed to understand at once what had occurred. Coming forward quickly, he looked me over, went away, and in a minute or two returned with the assistance of several others to convey me to the station. A number of people were still there ; so that when I was placed in the waiting-room to bide the arrival of a doctor, I could see no other way of keeping a calm face before such a number of eyes than by taking out my pipe and smoking, an action which, I am told, caused much sensation in the local press.

I bore this accident with an outward fortitude that was far from the true state of my feelings. The doctor, seeing the even development of my body, asked me if I was an athlete. Although I could scarcely claim to be one, I had been able, without any training, and at any time, to jump over a height of five feet ; had also been a swimmer, and, when occasion offered, had donned the gloves. Thinking of my present helplessness caused me many a bitter moment, but I managed to impress all comers with a false indifference.

What a kind-hearted race of people are these Canadians ! Here was I, an entire stranger among them, and yet every hour people were making inquiries, and interesting themselves on my behalf, bringing and sending books, grapes, bananas and other delicacies for a sick man. When a second operation was deemed necessary, the leg to be amputated at the knee, the whole town was concerned, and the doctors had to give injunctions not to admit such a number of kind-hearted visitors. At this time I was so weak of body that it was thought hopeless to expect recovery from this second operation. This was soon made apparent to me by the doctor's question as to whether I had any message to send to my people, hinting that there was a slight possibility of dying under the chloroform. A minister of the gospel was also there, and

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his sympathetic face certainly made the dying seem probable. Now, I have heard a great deal of dying men having a foresight of things to be, but I confess that I was never more calm in all my life than at this moment when death seemed so certain. I did not for one instant believe or expect that these eyes would again open to the light, after I had been in this low vital condition, deadened and darkened for over two hours, whilst my body was being cut and sawn like so much wood or stone. And yet I felt no terror of death. I had been taken in a sleigh from the station to the hospital, over a mile or more of snow : and the one thought that worried me most, when I was supposed to be face to face with death, was whether the town lay north, south, east or west from the hospital ; and this, I believe, was the last question I asked. After hearing an answer, I drew in the chloroform in long breaths, thinking to assist the doctors in their work. In spite of this, I have a faint recollection of struggling with all my might against its effects, previous to losing consciousness ; but I was greatly surprised on being afterwards told that I had, when in that condition, used more foul language in ten minutes' delirium than had probably been used in twenty-four hours by the whole population of Canada. It was explained to me that such language was not unusual in cases of this kind, which consoled me not a little, but I could not help wondering if the matron had been present, and if she had confided in her daughter. The latter was a young girl of sixteen years or thereabouts, and was so womanly and considerate that her mother could very well leave her in charge of the patients for the whole day, although this had not been necessary during my stay.

For three days after this operation I hovered between life and death, any breath expected to be my last. But in seven or eight days my vitality, which must be considered wonderful, returned in a small way, and I was then considered to be well out of danger. It was at this

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time that the kindness of these people touched me to the heart. The hospital was situated at the end of a long road, and all people, after they had passed the last house, which was some distance away, were then known to be visitors to the matron or one of her patients. On the verandah outside sat the matron's dog, and, long before people were close at hand, he barked, and so prepared us for their coming. When it was known that I was convalescent, this dog was kept so busy barking that his sharp clear voice became hoarse with the exertion. They came single, they came in twos and threes ; old people, young people and children ; until it became necessary to give them a more formal reception, limiting each person or couple, as it might be, to a few minutes' conversation. On hearing that I was fond of reading, books were at once brought by their owners, or sent by others ; some of which I had not the courage to read nor the heart to return, judging them wrongly perhaps by their titles of this character : *Freddie's Friend*, *Little Billie's Button* and *Sally's Sacrifice*. With such good attendance within, and so much kindness from without, what wonder that I was now fit to return to England, five weeks after the accident, after having undergone two serious operations ! My new friends in that distant land would persuade me to remain, assuring me of a comfortable living, but I decided to return to England as soon as possible, little knowing what my experience would be in the years following.

W. H. DAVIES,  
*The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (1908)

## THE DEATH OF AN OLD DOG

WHEN recalling the impressions and experiences of that most eventful sixth year, the one incident which looks biggest in memory, at all events in the last half of

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that year, is the death of Caesar. There is nothing in the past I can remember so well : it was indeed the most important event of my childhood—the first thing in a young life which brought the eternal note of sadness in.

It was in the early Spring, about the middle of August, and I can even remember that it was windy weather and bitterly cold for the time of year, when the old dog was approaching his end.

Caesar was an old valued dog, although of no superior breed : he was just an ordinary dog of the country, short-haired, with long legs and a blunt muzzle. The ordinary dog or native cur was about the size of a Scottish collie ; Caesar was quite a third larger, and it was said of him that he was as much above all other dogs of the house, numbering about twelve or fourteen, in intelligence and courage as in size. Naturally, he was the leader and master of the whole pack, and when he got up with an awful growl, baring his big teeth, and hurled himself on the others to chastise them for quarrelling or any other infringement of dog law, they took it lying down. He was a black dog, now in his old age sprinkled with white hairs all over his body, the face and legs having gone quite grey. Caesar in a rage, or on guard at night, or when driving cattle in from the plains, was a terrible being ; with us children he was mild-tempered and patient, allowing us to ride on his back, just like old Pechicho the sheep-dog. Now, in his decline, he grew irritable and surly, and ceased to be our playmate. The last two or three months of his life were very sad, and when it troubled us to see him so gaunt, with his big ribs protruding from his sides, to watch his twitchings when he dozed, groaning and wheezing the while, and mark, too, how painfully he struggled to get up on his feet, we wanted to know why it was so—why we could not give him something to make him well ? For answer they would open his great mouth to show us his teeth—the big blunt canines and old molars worn down to stumps.

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Old age was what ailed him—he was thirteen years old, and that did verily seem to me a great age, for I was not half that, yet it seemed to me that I had been a very, very long time in the world.

No one dreamed of such a thing as putting an end to him—no hint of such a thing was ever spoken. It was not the custom in that country to shoot an old dog because he was past work. I remember his last day, and how often we came to look at him and tried to comfort him with warm rugs and the offer of food and drink where he was lying in a sheltered place, no longer able to stand up. And that night he died : we knew it as soon as we were up in the morning. Then, after breakfast, during which we had been very solemn and quiet, our schoolmaster said : “ We must bury him to-day—at twelve o’clock, when I am free, will be the best time ; the boys can come with me, and old John can bring his spade.” This announcement greatly excited us, for we had never seen a dog buried, and had never even heard of such a thing having ever been done.

About noon that day old Caesar, dead and stiff, was taken by one of the workmen to a green open spot among the old peach trees, where his grave had already been dug. We followed our schoolmaster and watched while the body was lowered and the red earth shovelled in. The grave was deep, and Mr. Trigg assisted in filling it, puffing very much over the task and stopping at intervals to mop his face with his coloured cotton handkerchief.

Then when all was done, while we were still standing silently around, it came into Mr. Trigg’s mind to improve the occasion. Assuming his schoolroom expression he looked round at us and said solemnly : “ That’s the end. Every dog has his day and so has every man ; and the end is the same for both. We die like old Caesar, and are put into the ground and have the earth shovelled over us.”

Now these simple, common words affected me more than any other words I have heard in my life. They

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pierced me to the heart. I had heard something terrible—too terrible to think of, incredible—and yet—and yet if it was not so, why had he said it? Was it because he hated us, just because we were children and he had to teach us our lessons, and wanted to torture us? Alas! no, I could not believe that! Was this, then, the horrible fate that awaited us all? I had heard of death—I knew there was such a thing; I knew that all animals had to die, also that some men died. For how could anyone, even a child in its sixth year, overlook such a fact, especially in the country of my birth—a land of battle, murder and sudden death? I had not forgotten the young man tied to the post in the barn who had killed someone, and would perhaps, I had been told, be killed himself as a punishment. I knew, in fact, that there was good and evil in the world, good and bad men, and the bad men—murderers, thieves and liars—would all have to die, just like animals; but that there was any life after death I did not know. All the others, myself and my own people included, were good and would never taste death. How it came about that I had got no further in my system or philosophy of life I cannot say; I can only suppose that my mother had not yet begun to give me instruction in such matters on account of my tender years, or else that she had done so and that I had understood it in my own way. Yet, as I discovered later, she was a religious woman, and from infancy I had been taught to kneel and say a little prayer each evening:

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

But who the Lord was or what my soul was I had no idea. It was just a pretty little way of saying in rhyme that I was going to bed. My world was a purely material one, and a most wonderful world it was, but how I came to be in it I didn't know; I only knew (or

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imagined) that I would be in it always, seeing new and strange things every day, and never, never get tired of it. In literature it is only in Vaughan, Traherne and other mystics that I find any adequate expression of that perpetual rapturous delight in nature and my own existence which I experienced at that period.

And now these never-to-be-forgotten words spoken over the grave of our old dog had come to awaken me from that beautiful dream of perpetual joy !

When I recall this event I am less astonished at my ignorance than at the intensity of the feeling I experienced, the terrible darkness it brought on so young a mind. The child's mind we think, and in fact know, is like that of the lower animals ; or if higher than the animal mind, it is not so high as that of the simplest savage. He cannot concentrate his thought—he cannot think at all ; his consciousness is in its dawn ; he revels in colours, in odours, is thrilled by touch and taste and sound, and is like a well-nourished pup or kitten at play on a green turf in the sunshine. This being so, one would have thought that the pain of the revelation I had received would have quickly vanished—that the vivid impressions of external things would have blotted it out and restored the harmony. But it was not so ; the pain continued and increased until it was no longer to be borne ; then I sought my mother, first watching until she was alone in her room. Yet when with her I feared to speak lest with a word she should confirm the dreadful tidings. Looking down, she all at once became alarmed at the sight of my face, and began to question me. Then, struggling against my tears, I told her of the words which had been spoken at the old dog's burial, and asked her if it was true, if I—if she—if all of us had to die and be buried in the ground ? She replied that it was not wholly true ; it was only true in a way, since our bodies had to die and be buried in the earth, but we had an immortal part which could not die. It was true that old Caesar

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had been a good, faithful dog, and felt and understood things almost like a human being, and most persons believed that when a dog died he died wholly and had no after-life. We could not know that ; some very great, good men had thought differently ; they believed that the animals, like us, would live again. That was also her belief—her strong hope ; but we could not know for certain, because it had been hidden from us. For ourselves, we knew that we could not really die, because God Himself, who made us and all things, had told us so, and His promise of eternal life had been handed down to us in His Book—in the Bible.

To all this and much more I listened trembling, with a fearful interest, and when I had once grasped the idea that death when it came to me, as it must, would leave me alive after all—that, as she explained, the part of me that really mattered, the myself, the I am I, which knew and considered things, would never perish, I experienced a sudden immense relief. When I went out from her side again I wanted to run and jump for joy and cleave the air like a bird. For I had been in prison and had suffered torture, and was now free again—death would not destroy me !

There was another result of my having unburdened my heart to my mother. She had been startled at the poignancy of the feeling I had displayed, and, greatly blaming herself for having left me too long in that ignorant state, began to give me religious instruction. It was too early, since at that age it was not possible for me to rise to the conception of an immaterial world. That power, I imagine, comes later to the normal child at the age of ten or twelve. To tell him when he is five or six or seven that God is in all places at once and sees all things, only produces the idea of a wonderfully active and quick-sighted person, with eyes like a bird's, able to see what is going on all round. A short time ago I read an anecdote of a little girl who, on being put to



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bed by her mother, was told not to be afraid in the dark, since God would be there to watch and guard her while she slept. Then taking the candle, the mother went downstairs ; but presently her little girl came down too, in her nightdress, and, when questioned, replied, " I'm going to stay down here in the light, mummy, and you can go up to my room and sit with God." My own idea of God at that time was no higher. I would lie awake thinking of Him there in the room, puzzling over the question as to how He could attend to all His numerous affairs and spend so much time looking after me. Lying with my eyes open, I could see nothing in the dark ; still I knew He was there, because I had been told so, and this troubled me. But no sooner would I close my eyes than His image would appear standing at a distance of three or four feet from the head of the bed, in the form of a column five feet high or so and about four feet circumference. The colour was blue, but varied in depth and intensity ; on some nights it was sky-blue, but usually of a deeper shade, a pure, soft, beautiful blue like that of the morning-glory or wild geranium.

It would not surprise me to find that many persons have some such material image or presentment of the spiritual entities they are taught to believe in at too tender an age. Recently, in comparing childish memories with a friend, he told me that he too always saw God as a blue object, but of no definite shape.

The blue column haunted me at night for many months ; I don't think it quite vanished, ceasing to be anything but a memory, until I was seven—a date far ahead of where we are now.

To return to that second blissful revelation which came to me from my mother. Happy as it made me to know that death would not put an end to my existence, my state after the first joyful relief was not one of perfect happiness. All she said to comfort and make me brave had produced its effect—I knew now that death was but

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a change to an even greater bliss than I could have in this life. How could I, not yet six, think otherwise than as she had told me to think, or have a doubt? A mother is more to her child than any other being, human or divine, can ever be to him in his subsequent life. He is as dependent on her as any fledgling in the nest on its parent—even more, since she warms his callow mind or soul as well as body.

Notwithstanding all this, the fear of death came back to me in a little while, and for a long time disquieted me, especially when the fact of death was brought sharply before me. These reminders were only too frequent; there was seldom a day on which I did not see something killed. When the killing was instantaneous, as when a bird was shot and dropped dead like a stone, I was not disturbed; it was nothing but a strange, exciting spectacle, but failed to bring the fact of death home to me. It was chiefly when cattle were slaughtered that the terror returned in its full force. And no wonder! The native manner of killing a cow or bullock at that time was peculiarly painful. Occasionally it would be slaughtered out of sight on the plain, and the hide and flesh brought in by the men, but, as a rule, the beast would be driven up close to the house to save trouble. One of the two or three mounted men engaged in the operation would throw his lasso over the horns, and, galloping off, pull the rope taut; a second man would then drop from his horse, and running up to the animal behind, pluck out his big knife and with two lightning-quick blows sever the tendons of both hind legs. Instantly the beast would go down on his haunches and the same man, knife in hand, would flit round to its front or side, and watching his opportunity, presently thrust the long blade into its throat just above the chest, driving it in to the hilt and working it round; then when it was withdrawn a great torrent of blood would pour out from the tortured beast, still standing on his fore-legs, bellow-

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ing all the time with agony. At this point the slaughterer would often leap lightly on to its back, stick his spurs in its sides, and, using the flat of his long knife as a whip, pretend to be riding a race, yelling with fiendish glee. The bellowing would subside into deep, awful, sob-like sounds and chokings ; then the rider, seeing the animal about to collapse, would fling himself nimbly off. The beast down, they would all run to it, and throwing themselves on its quivering side as on a couch, begin making and lighting their cigarettes.

Slaughtering a cow was grand sport for them, and the more active and dangerous the animal, the more prolonged the fight, the better they liked it ; they were as joyfully excited as at a fight with knives or an ostrich hunt. To me it was an awful object-lesson, and held me fascinated with horror. For this was death ! The crimson torrents of blood, the deep, human-like cries, made the beast appear like some huge, powerful man caught in a snare by small, weak, but cunning adversaries, who tortured him for their delight and mocked him in his agony.

There were other occurrences about that time to keep the thoughts and fear of death alive. One day a traveller came to the gate, and, after unsaddling his horse, went about sixty or seventy yards away to a shady spot, where he sat down on the green slope of the fosse to cool himself. He had been riding many hours in a burning sun, and wanted cooling. He attracted everybody's attention on his arrival by his appearance : middle-aged, with good features and curly brown hair and beard, but huge—one of the biggest men I had ever seen ; his weight could not have been under seventeen stone. Sitting or reclining on the grass, he fell asleep, and rolling down the slope fell with a tremendous splash into the water, which was about six feet deep. So loud was the splash that it was heard by some of the men at work in the barrá, and running out to ascertain the cause, they found out what

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had happened. The man had gone under and did not rise ; with a good deal of trouble he was raised up and drawn with ropes to the top of the bank.

I gazed on him lying motionless, to all appearances stone dead—the huge, ox-like man I had seen less than an hour ago, when he had excited our wonder at his great size and strength, and now still in death—dead as old Caesar under the ground with the grass growing over him ! Meanwhile the men who had hauled him out were busy with him, turning him over and rubbing his body, and after about twelve or fifteen minutes there was a gasp and signs of returning life, and by and by he opened his eyes. The dead man was alive again ; yet the shock to me was just as great and the effect as lasting as if he had been truly dead.

Another instance which will bring me down to the end of my sixth year and the conclusion of this sad chapter. At this time we had a girl in the house, whose sweet face is one of a little group of half a dozen which I remember most vividly. She was a niece of our shepherd's wife, an Argentine woman married to an Englishman, and came to us to look after the smaller children. She was nineteen years old, a pale, slim, pretty girl, with large dark eyes and abundant black hair. Margarita had the sweetest smile imaginable, the softest voice and gentlest manner, and was so much loved by everybody in the house that she was like one of the family. Unhappily she was consumptive, and after a few months had to be sent back to her aunt. Their little place was only half a mile or so from the house, and every day my mother visited her, doing all that was possible with such skill and remedies as she possessed to give her ease, and providing her with delicacies. The girl did not want a priest to visit her and prepare her for death ; she worshipped her mistress, and wished to be of the same faith and in the end she died a pervert or convert, according to this or that person's point of view.

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The day after her death we children were taken to see our beloved Margarita for the last time ; but when we arrived at the door, and the others following my mother went in, I alone hung back. They came out and tried to persuade me to enter, even to pull me in, and described her appearance to excite my curiosity. She was lying all in white, with her black hair combed out and loose, on her white bed, with our flowers on her breast, and at her sides, and looked very, very beautiful. It was all in vain. To look on Margarita dead was more than I could bear. I was told that only her body of clay was dead—the beautiful body we had come to say good-bye to ; that her soul—she herself, our loved Margarita—was alive and happy, far, far happier than any person could ever be on this earth ; that when her end was near she had smiled very sweetly, and assured them that all fear of death had left her—that God was taking her to Himself. Even this was not enough to make me face the awful sight of Margarita dead ; the very thought of it was an intolerable weight on my heart ; but it was not grief that gave me this sensation, much as I grieved ; it was solely my fear of death.

W. H. HUDSON, *Far Away and Long Ago* (1918)

## AN ESCAPE FROM THE BOERS

DURING the first three weeks of my captivity, although I was a party to all plans of revolt or escape, I was engaged in arguing with the Boer Authorities that they should release me as a Press Correspondent. They replied that I had forfeited my non-combatant status by the part I had taken in the armoured train fight. I contended that I had not fired a shot and had been taken unarmed. This was strictly true. But the Natal newspapers had been captured by the Boers. These contained

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glowing accounts of my activities, and attributed the escape of the engine and the wounded entirely to me. General Joubert therefore intimated that even if I had not fired a shot myself, I had injured the Boer operations by freeing the engine, and that I must therefore be treated as a prisoner of war. As soon as I learned of this decision, in the first week of December, I resolved to escape.

I shall transcribe what I wrote at the time where I cannot improve upon it.

“The State Model Schools stood in the midst of a quadrangle, and were surrounded on two sides by an iron grille and on two by a corrugated-iron fence about ten feet high. These boundaries offered little obstacle to anyone who possessed the activity of youth, but the fact that they were guarded on the inside by sentries, fifty yards apart, armed with rifle and revolver, made them a well-nigh insuperable barrier. No walls are so hard to pierce as living walls.

“After anxious reflection and continual watching, it was discovered by several of the prisoners that when the sentries along the eastern side walked about on their beats they were at certain moments unable to see the top of a few yards of the wall near the small circular lavatory office which can be seen on the plan. The electric lights in the middle of the quadrangle brilliantly lighted the whole place, but the eastern wall was in shadow. The first thing was therefore to pass the two sentries near the office. It was necessary to hit off the exact moment when both their backs should be turned together. After the wall was scaled we should be in the garden of the villa next door. There the plan came to an end. Everything after this was vague and uncertain. How to get out of the garden, how to pass unnoticed through the streets, how to evade the patrols that surrounded the town, and above all how to cover the two hundred and eighty

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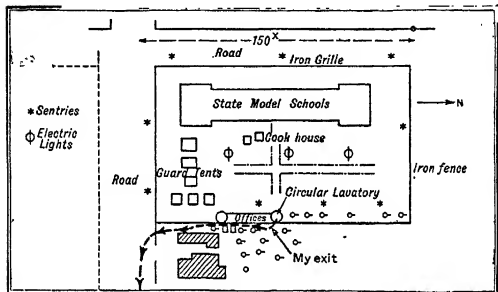
miles to the Portuguese frontier, were questions which would arise at a later stage.

“ Together with Captain Haldane and Lieutenant Brockie I made an abortive attempt, not pushed with any decision, on December 11. There was no difficulty in getting into the circular office. But to climb out of it over the wall was a hazard of the sharpest character. Anyone doing so must at the moment he was on top of the wall be plainly visible to the sentries fifteen yards away, if they were in the right place and happened to look ! Whether the sentries would challenge or fire depended entirely upon their individual dispositions, and no one could tell what they would do. Nevertheless I was determined that nothing should stop my taking the plunge the next day. As the 12th wore away my fears crystallised more and more into desperation. In the evening, after my two friends had made an attempt, but had not found the moment propitious, I strolled across the quadrangle and secreted myself in the circular office. Through an aperture in the metal casing of which it was built I watched the sentries. For some time they remained stolid and obstructive. Then all of a sudden one turned and walked up to his comrade, and they began to talk. Their backs were turned.

“ Now or never ! I stood on a ledge, seized the top of the wall with my hands, and drew myself up. Twice I let myself down again in sickly hesitation, and then with a third resolve scrambled up and over. My waistcoat got entangled with the ornamental metal-work on the top. I had to pause for an appreciable moment to extricate myself. In this posture I had one parting glimpse of the sentries still talking with their backs turned fifteen yards away. One of them was lighting his cigarette, and I remember the glow on the inside of his hands as a distinct impression which my mind recorded. Then I lowered myself lightly down into the adjoining

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garden and crouched among the shrubs. I was free ! The first step had been taken, and it was irrevocable. It now remained to await the arrival of my comrades. The bushes in the garden gave a good deal of cover, and in the moonlight their shadows fell dark on the ground. I lay here for an hour in great impatience and anxiety. People were continually moving about in the garden, and once a man came and apparently looked straight at



PLAN OF THE STATE MODEL SCHOOLS

me only a few yards away. Where were the others ? Why did they not make the attempt ?

"Suddenly I heard a voice from within the quadrangle say, quite loud, 'All up.' I crawled back to the wall. Two officers were walking up and down inside, jabbering Latin words, laughing and talking all manner of nonsense—amid which I caught my name. I risked a cough. One of the officers immediately began to chatter alone. The other said, slowly and clearly, 'They cannot get out. The sentry suspects. It's all up. Can you get back again ?' But now all my fears fell from me at once. To go back was impossible. I could not hope to climb



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the wall unnoticed. There was no helpful ledge on the outside. Fate pointed onwards. Besides, I said to myself, 'Of course, I shall be recaptured, but I will at least have a run for my money.' I said to the officers, 'I shall go on alone.'

"Now I was in the right mood for these undertakings—failure being almost certain, no odds against success affected me. All risks were less than the certainty. A glance at the plan will show that the gate which led into the road was only a few yards from another sentry. I said to myself, '*Toujours de l'audace*,' put my hat on my head, strode into the middle of the garden, walked past the windows of the house without any attempt at concealment, and so went through the gate and turned to the left. I passed the sentry at less than five yards. Most of them knew me by sight. Whether he looked at me or not I do not know, for I never turned my head. I restrained with the utmost difficulty an impulse to run. But after walking a hundred yards and hearing no challenge, I knew that the second obstacle had been surmounted. I was at large in Pretoria.

"I walked on leisurely through the night, humming a tune and choosing the middle of the road. The streets were full of burghers, but they paid no attention to me. Gradually I reached the suburbs, and on a little bridge I sat down to reflect and consider. I was in the heart of the enemy's country. I knew no one to whom I could apply for succour. Nearly three hundred miles stretched between me and Delagoa Bay. My escape must be known at dawn. Pursuit would be immediate. Yet all exits were barred. The town was picketed, the country was patrolled, the trains were searched, the line was guarded. I wore a civilian brown flannel suit. I had seventy-five pounds in my pocket and four slabs of chocolate, but the compass and the map which might have guided me, the opium tablets and meat lozenges which should have sustained me, were in my friends'

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pockets in the State Model Schools. Worst of all, I could not speak a word of Dutch or Kaffir, and how was I to get food or direction ?

“ But when hope had departed, fear had gone as well. I formed a plan. I would find the Delagoa Bay Railway. Without map or compass, I must follow that in spite of the pickets. I looked at the stars. Orion shone brightly. Scarcely a year before he had guided me when lost in the desert to the banks of the Nile. He had given me water. Now he should lead to freedom. I could not endure the want of either.

“ After walking south for half a mile I struck the railway. Was it the line to Delagoa Bay or the Pietersburg branch ? If it were the former, it should run east. But, so far as I could see, this line ran northwards. Still, it might be only winding its way out among the hills. I resolved to follow it. The night was delicious. A cool breeze fanned my face, and a wild feeling of exhilaration took hold of me. At any rate, I was free, if only for an hour. That was something. The fascination of the adventure grew. Unless the stars in their courses fought for me, I could not escape. Where, then, was the need of caution ? I marched briskly along the line. Here and there the lights of a picket fire gleamed. Every bridge had its watchers. But I passed them all, making very short *détours* at the dangerous places, and really taking scarcely any precautions. Perhaps that was the reason I succeeded.

“ As I walked I extended my plan. I could not march three hundred miles to the frontier. I would board a train in motion and hide under the seats, on the roof, on the couplings—anywhere. I thought of Paul Bultitude’s escape from school in *Vice Versa*. I saw myself emerging from under the seat, and bribing or persuading some fat first-class passenger to help me. What train should I take ? The first, of course. After walking for two hours, I perceived the signal lights of a station. I left the line,

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and circling round it, hid in the ditch by the track about two hundred yards beyond the platform. I argued that the train would stop at the station and that it would not have got up too much speed by the time it reached me. An hour passed. I began to grow impatient. Suddenly I heard the whistle and the approaching rattle. Then the great yellow headlights of the engine flashed into view. The train waited five minutes at the station, and started again with much noise and steaming. I crouched by the track. I rehearsed the act in my mind. I must wait until the engine had passed, otherwise I should be seen. Then I must make a dash for the carriages.

"The train started slowly, but gathered speed sooner than I had expected. The flaring lights drew swiftly near. The rattle became a roar. The dark mass hung for a second above me. The engine-driver silhouetted against his furnace glow, the black profile of the engine, the clouds of steam rushed past. Then I hurled myself on the trucks, clutched at something, missed, clutched again, missed again, grasped some sort of hand-hold, was swung off my feet—my toes bumping on the line, and with a struggle seated myself on the couplings of the fifth truck from the front of the train. It was a goods train, and the trucks were full of sacks, soft sacks covered with coal-dust. They were in fact bags filled with empty coal-bags going back to their colliery. I crawled on top and burrowed in among them. In five minutes I was completely buried. The sacks were warm and comfortable. Perhaps the engine-driver had seen me rush up to the train and would give the alarm at the next station; on the other hand, perhaps not. Where was the train going to? Where would it be unloaded? Would it be searched? Was it on the Delagoa Bay line? What should I do in the morning? Ah, never mind that. Sufficient for the night was the luck thereof. Fresh plans for fresh contingencies. I resolved to sleep, nor can I imagine a more pleasing lullaby than the clatter of the

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train that carries an escaping prisoner at twenty miles an hour away from the enemy's capital.

"How long I slept I do not know, but I woke up suddenly with all feelings of exhilaration gone, and only the consciousness of oppressive difficulties heavy on me. I must leave the train before daybreak, so that I could drink at a pool and find some hiding-place while it was still dark. I would not run the risk of being unloaded with the coal-bags. Another night I would board another train. I crawled from my cosy hiding-place among the sacks and sat again on the couplings. The train was running at a fair speed, but I felt it was time to leave it. I took hold of the iron handle at the back of the truck, pulled strongly with my left hand, and sprang. My feet struck the ground in two gigantic strides, and the next instant I was sprawling in the ditch considerably shaken but unhurt. The train, my faithful ally of the night, hurried on its journey.

"It was still dark. I was in the middle of a wide valley, surrounded by low hills, and carpeted with high grass drenched in dew. I searched for water in the nearest gully, and soon found a clear pool. I was very thirsty, but long after I had quenched my thirst I continued to drink, that I might have sufficient for the whole day.

"Presently the dawn began to break, and the sky to the east grew yellow and red, slashed across with heavy black clouds. I saw with relief that the railway ran steadily towards the sunrise. I had taken the right line, after all.

"Having drunk my fill, I set out for the hills, among which I hoped to find some hiding-place, and as it became broad daylight I entered a small grove of trees which grew on the side of a deep ravine. Here I resolved to wait till dusk. I had one consolation: no one in the world knew where I was—I did not know myself. It was now four o'clock. Fourteen hours lay between me and the night. My impatience to proceed while I was still

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strong doubled their length. At first it was terribly cold, but by degrees the sun gained power, and by ten o'clock the heat was oppressive. My sole companion was a gigantic vulture, who manifested an extravagant interest in my condition, and made hideous and ominous gurglings from time to time. From my lofty position I commanded a view of the whole valley. A little tin-roofed town lay three miles to the westward. Scattered farmsteads, each with a clump of trees, relieved the monotony of the undulating ground. At the foot of the hill stood a Kaffir kraal, and the figures of its inhabitants dotted the patches of cultivation or surrounded the droves of goats and cows which fed on the pasture. . . . During the day I ate one slab of chocolate, which, with the heat, produced a violent thirst. The pool was hardly half a mile away, but I dared not leave the shelter of the little wood, for I could see the figures of white men riding or walking occasionally across the valley, and once a Boer came and fired two shots at birds close to my hiding-place. But no one discovered me.

"The elation and the excitement of the previous night had burnt away, and a chilling reaction followed. I was very hungry, for I had had no dinner before starting, and chocolate, though it sustains, does not satisfy. I had scarcely slept, but yet my heart beat so fiercely, and I was so nervous and perplexed about the future that I could not rest. I thought of all the chances that lay against me; I dreaded and detested more than words can express the prospect of being caught and dragged back to Pretoria. I found no comfort in any of the philosophical ideas which some men parade in their hours of ease and strength and safety. They seemed only fair-weather friends. I realised with awful force that no exercise of my own feeble wit and strength could save me from my enemies, and that without the assistance of that High Power which interferes in the eternal sequence of causes and effects more often than we are always prone to

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admit, I could never succeed. I prayed long and earnestly for help and guidance. My prayer, as it seems to me, was swiftly and wonderfully answered."

I wrote these lines many years ago while the impression of the adventure was strong upon me. Then I could tell no more. To have done so would have compromised the liberty and perhaps the lives of those who had helped me. For many years these reasons have disappeared. The time has come when I can relate the events which followed, and which changed my nearly hopeless position into one of superior advantage.

During the day I had watched the railway with attention. I saw two or three trains pass along it each way. I argued that the same number would pass at night. I resolved to board one of these. I thought I could improve on my procedure of the previous evening. I had observed how slowly the trains, particularly long goods trains, climbed some of the steep gradients. Sometimes they were hardly going at a foot's pace. It would probably be easy to choose a point where the line was not only on an up grade but also on a curve. Thus I could board some truck on the convex side of the train when both the engine and the guard's van were bent away, and when consequently neither the engine-driver nor the guard would see me. This plan seemed to me in every respect sound. I saw myself leaving the train again before dawn, having been carried forward another sixty or seventy miles during the night. That would be scarcely one hundred and fifty miles from the frontier. And why should not the process be repeated? Where was the flaw? I could not see it. With three long bounds on three successive nights I could be in Portuguese territory. Meanwhile I still had two or three slabs of chocolate and a pocketful of crumbled biscuit—enough, that is to say, to keep body and soul together at a pinch without running the awful risk of recapture

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entailed by accosting a single human being. In this mood I watched with increasing impatience the arrival of darkness.

The long day reached its close at last. The western clouds flushed into fire ; the shadows of the hills stretched out across the valley ; a ponderous Boer wagon with its long team crawled slowly along the track towards the township, the Kaffirs collected their herds and drew them round their kraal ; the daylight died, and soon it was quite dark. Then, and not until then, I set forth. I hurried to the railway line, scrambling along through the boulders and high grass and pausing on my way to drink at a stream of sweet cold water. I made my way to the place where I had seen the trains crawling so slowly up the slope, and I soon found a point where the curve of the track fulfilled all the conditions of my plan. Here, behind a little bush, I sat down and waited hopefully. An hour passed ; two hours passed ; three hours—and yet no train. Six hours had now elapsed since the last, whose time I had carefully noted, had gone by. Surely one was due. Another hour slipped away. Still no train ! My plan began to crumble and my hopes to ooze out of me. After all, was it not quite possible that no trains ran on this part of the line during the dark hours ? This was in fact the case, and I might well have continued to wait in vain till daylight. However, between twelve and one in the morning I lost patience and started along the track, resolved to cover at any rate ten or fifteen miles of my journey. I did not make much progress. Every bridge was guarded by armed men ; every few miles were huts. At intervals there were stations with tin-roofed villages clustering around them. All the veldt was bathed in the bright rays of the full moon, and to avoid these dangerous places I had to make wide circuits and even to creep along the ground. Leaving the railroad I fell into bogs and swamps, brushed through high grass dripping with dew, and waded across the streams over

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which the bridges carried the railway. I was soon drenched to the waist. I had been able to take very little exercise during my month's imprisonment, and I was quickly tired with walking and with want of food and sleep. Presently I approached a station. It was a mere platform in the veldt, with two or three buildings and huts around it. But laid up on the sidings, obviously for the night, were three long goods trains. Evidently the flow of traffic over the railway was uneven. These three trains, motionless in the moonlight, confirmed my fears that traffic was not maintained by night on this part of the line. Where, then, was my plan which in the afternoon had looked so fine and sure?

It now occurred to me that I might board one of these stationary trains immediately, and hiding amid its freight be carried forward during the next day—and night too if all were well. On the other hand, where were they going to? Where would they stop? Where would they be unloaded? Once I entered a wagon my lot would be cast. I might find myself ignominiously unloaded and recaptured at Witbank or Middelburg, or at any station in the long two hundred miles which separated me from the frontier. It was necessary at all costs before taking such a step to find out where these trains were going. To do this I must penetrate the station, examine the labels on the trucks or on the merchandise, and see if I could extract any certain guidance from them. I crept up to the platform and got between two of the long trains on the siding. I was proceeding to examine the markings on the trucks when loud voices rapidly approaching on the outside of the trains filled me with fear. Several Kaffirs were laughing and shouting in their unmodulated tones, and I heard, as I thought, a European voice arguing or ordering. At any rate, it was enough for me. I retreated between the two trains to the extreme end of the siding, and slipped stealthily but rapidly into the grass of the illimitable plain.



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There was nothing for it but to plod on—but in an increasingly purposeless and hopeless manner. I felt very miserable when I looked around and saw here and there the lights of houses and thought of the warmth and comfort within them, but knew that they meant only danger to me. Far off on the moonlit horizon there presently began to shine the row of six or eight big lights which marked either Witbank or Middelburg station. Out in the darkness to my left gleamed two or three fires. I was sure they were not the lights of houses, but how far off they were or what they were I could not be certain. The idea formed in my mind that they were the fires of a Kaffir kraal. Then I began to think that the best use I could make of my remaining strength would be to go to these Kaffirs. I had heard that they hated the Boers and were friendly to the British. At any rate, they would probably not arrest me. They might give me food and a dry corner to sleep in. Although I could not speak a word of their language, yet I thought perhaps they might understand the value of a British bank-note. They might even be induced to help me. A guide, a pony—but, above all, rest, warmth and food—such were the promptings which dominated my mind. So I set out towards the fires.

I must have walked a mile or so in this resolve before a realisation of its weakness and imprudence took possession of me. Then I turned back again to the railway line and retraced my steps perhaps half the distance. Then I stopped and sat down, completely baffled, destitute of any idea what to do or where to turn. Suddenly without the slightest reason all my doubts disappeared. It was certainly by no process of logic that they were dispelled. I just felt quite clear that I would go to the Kaffir kraal. I had sometimes in former years held a "Planchette" pencil and written while others had touched my wrist or hand. I acted in exactly the same unconscious or sub-conscious manner now.

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I walked on rapidly towards the fires, which I had in the first instance thought were not more than a couple of miles from the railwayline. I soon found they were much farther away than that. After about an hour or an hour and a half they still seemed almost as far off as ever. But I persevered, and presently between two and three o'clock in the morning I perceived that they were not the fires of a Kaffir kraal. The angular outline of buildings began to draw out against them, and soon I saw that I was approaching a group of houses around the mouth of a coal-mine. The wheel which worked the winding gear was plainly visible, and I could see that the fires which had led me so far were from the furnaces of the engines. Hard by, surrounded by one or two slighter structures, stood a small but substantial stone house two storeys high.

I halted in the wilderness to survey this scene and to revolve my action. It was still possible to turn back. But in that direction I saw nothing but the prospect of further futile wanderings terminated by hunger, fever, discovery or surrender. On the other hand, here in front was a chance. I had heard it said before I escaped that in the mining district of Witbank and Middelburg there were a certain number of English residents who had been suffered to remain in the country in order to keep the mines working. Had I been led to one of these? What did this house which frowned dark and inscrutable upon me contain? A Briton or a Boer; a friend or a foe? Nor did this exhaust the possibilities. I had my seventy-five pounds in English notes in my pocket. If I revealed my identity, I thought that I could give reasonable assurance of a thousand. I might find some indifferent neutral-minded person who out of good nature or for a large sum of money would aid me in my bitter and desperate need. Certainly I would try to make what bargain I could now—now while I still had the strength to plead my cause and perhaps to extricate myself if the results were adverse. Still the odds were

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heavy against me, and it was with faltering and reluctant steps that I walked out of the shimmering gloom of the veldt into the light of the furnace fires, advanced towards the silent house, and struck with my fist upon the door.

There was a pause. Then I knocked again. And almost immediately a light sprang up above and an upper window opened.

"*Wer ist da?*" cried a man's voice.

I felt the shock of disappointment and consternation to my fingers.

"I want help; I have had an accident," I replied.

Some muttering followed. Then I heard steps descending the stairs, the bolt of the door was drawn, the lock was turned. It was opened abruptly, and in the darkness of the passage a tall man hastily attired, with a pale face and dark moustache, stood before me.

"What do you want?" he said, this time in English.

I had now to think of something to say. I wanted above all to get into parley with this man, to get matters in such a state that instead of raising an alarm and summoning others he would discuss things quietly.

"I am a burgher," I began. "I have had an accident. I was going to join my commando at Komati Poort. I have fallen off the train. We were skylarking. I have been unconscious for hours. I think I have dislocated my shoulder."

It is astonishing how one thinks of these things. This story leapt out as if I had learnt it by heart. Yet I had not the slightest idea what I was going to say or what the next sentence would be.

The stranger regarded me intently, and after some hesitation said at length, "Well, come in." He retreated a little into the darkness of the passage, threw open a door on one side of it, and pointed with his left hand into a dark room. I walked past him, and entered wondering if it was to be my prison. He followed, struck a light, lit a lamp, and set it on the table on the far side

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of which I stood. I was in a small room, evidently a dining-room and office in one. I noticed besides the large table, a roll desk, two or three chairs, and one of those machines for making soda-water, consisting of two glass globes set one above the other and encased in thin wire-netting. On his end of the table my host had laid a revolver, which he had hitherto presumably been holding in his right hand.

"I think I'd like to know a little more about this railway accident of yours," he said, after a considerable pause.

"I think," I replied, "I had better tell you the truth."

"I think you had," he said slowly.

So I took the plunge and threw all I had upon the board.

"I am Winston Churchill, War Correspondent of the *Morning Post*. I escaped last night from Pretoria. I am making my way to the frontier." (Making my way !)  
"I have plenty of money. Will you help me ?"

There was another long pause. My companion rose from the table slowly and locked the door. After this act, which struck me as unpromising, and was certainly ambiguous, he advanced upon me and suddenly held out his hand.

"Thank God you have come here ! It is the only house for twenty miles where you would not have been handed over. But we are all British here, and we will see you through."

It is easier to recall across the gulf of years the spasm of relief which swept over me, than it is to describe it. A moment before I had thought myself trapped ; and now friends, food, resources, aid, were all at my disposal. I felt like a drowning man pulled out of the water and informed he has won the Derby !

My host now introduced himself as Mr. John Howard, manager of the Transvaal Collieries. He had become a naturalised burgher of the Transvaal some years before

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the war. But out of consideration for his British race and some inducements which he had offered to the local Field Cornet, he had not been called up to fight against the British. Instead he had been allowed to remain with one or two others on the mine, keeping it pumped out and in good order until coal-cutting could be resumed. He had with him at the mine-head, besides his secretary, who was British, an engine-man from Lancashire and two Scottish miners. All these four were British subjects and had been allowed to remain only upon giving their parole to observe strict neutrality. He himself as burgher of the Transvaal Republic would be guilty of treason in harbouring me, and liable to be shot if caught at the time or found out later on.

"Never mind," he said, "we will fix it up somehow." And added, "The Field Cornet was round here this afternoon asking about you. They have got the hue and cry out all along the line and all over the district."

I said that I did not wish to compromise him.

Let him give me food, a pistol, a guide, and if possible a pony, and I would make my own way to the sea, marching by night across country far away from the railway line or any habitation.

He would not hear of it. He would fix up something. But he enjoined the utmost caution. Spies were everywhere. He had two Dutch servant maids actually sleeping in the house. There were many Kaffirs employed about the mine premises and on the pumping machinery of the mine. Surveying these dangers, he became very thoughtful.

Then : "But you are famishing."

I did not contradict him. In a moment he had hustled off into the kitchen, telling me meanwhile to help myself from a whisky bottle and the soda-water machine which I have already mentioned. He returned after an interval with the best part of a cold leg of mutton and various other delectable commodities, and, leaving me to do full

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justice to these, quitted the room and let himself out of the house by a back door.

Nearly an hour passed before Mr. Howard returned. In this period my physical well-being had been brought into harmony with the improvement in my prospects. I felt confident of success and equal to anything.

"It's all right," said Mr. Howard. "I have seen the men, and they are all for it. We must put you down the pit to-night, and there you will have to stay till we can see how to get you out of the country. One difficulty," he said, "will be the *skoff* (food). The Dutch girl sees every mouthful I eat. The cook will want to know what has happened to her leg of mutton. I shall have to think it all out during the night. You must get down the pit at once. We'll make you comfortable enough."

Accordingly, just as the dawn was breaking, I followed my host across a little yard into the enclosure in which stood the winding-wheel of the mine. Here a stout man, introduced as Mr. Dewsnap, of Oldham, locked my hand in a grip of crushing vigour.

"They'll all vote for you next time," he whispered.

A door was opened and I entered the cage. Down we shot into the bowels of the earth. At the bottom of the mine were the two Scottish miners with lanterns and a big bundle which afterwards proved to be a mattress and blankets. We walked for some time through the pitchy labyrinth, with frequent turns, twists and alterations of level, and finally stopped in a sort of chamber where the air was cool and fresh. Here my guide set down his bundle, and Mr. Howard handed me a couple of candles, a bottle of whisky and a box of cigars.

"There's no difficulty about these," he said. "I keep them under lock and key. Now we must plan how to feed you to-morrow."

"Don't you move from here, whatever happens," was the parting injunction. "There will be Kaffirs about the mine after daylight, but we shall be on the look-out that

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none of them wanders this way. None of them has seen anything so far."

My four friends trooped off with their lanterns, and I was left alone. Viewed from the velvety darkness of the pit, life seemed bathed in rosy light. After the perplexity and even despair through which I had passed I counted upon freedom as certain. Instead of a humiliating recapture and long months of monotonous imprisonment, probably in the common jail, I saw myself once more rejoining the Army with a real exploit to my credit, and in that full enjoyment of freedom and keen pursuit of adventure dear to the heart of youth. In this comfortable mood, and speeded by intense fatigue, I soon slept the sleep of the weary—but of the triumphant.

I do not know how many hours I slept, but the following afternoon must have been far advanced when I found myself thoroughly awake. I put out my hand for the candle, but could feel it nowhere. I did not know what pitfalls these mining galleries might contain, so I thought it better to lie quiet on my mattress and await developments. Several hours passed before the faint gleam of a lantern showed that someone was coming. It proved to be Mr. Howard himself, armed with a chicken and other good things. He also brought several books. He asked me why I had not lighted the candle. I said I couldn't find it.

"Didn't you put it under the mattress?" he asked.

"No."

"Then the rats must have got it."

He told me there were swarms of rats in the mine, that some years ago he had introduced a particular kind of white rat, which was an excellent scavenger, and that these had multiplied and thriven exceedingly. He told me he had been to the house of an English doctor twenty miles away to get the chicken. He was worried at the attitude of the two Dutch servants, who were very inquisitive about the depredations upon the leg of

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mutton for which I had been responsible. If he could not get another chicken cooked for the next day, he would have to take double helpings on his own plate and slip the surplus into a parcel for me while the servant was out of the room. He said that inquiries were being made for me all over the district by the Boers, and that the Pretoria Government was making a tremendous fuss about my escape. The fact that there were a number of English remaining in the Middelburg mining region indicated it as a likely place for me to have turned to, and all persons of English origin were more or less suspect.

I again expressed my willingness to go on alone with a Kaffir guide and a pony, but this he utterly refused to entertain. It would take a lot of planning, he said, to get me out of the country, and I might have to stay in the mine for quite a long time.

"Here," he said, "you are absolutely safe. Mac" (by which he meant one of the Scottish miners) "knows all the disused workings and places that no one else would dream of. There is one place here where the water actually touches the roof for a foot or two. If they searched the mine, Mac would dive under that with you into the workings cut off beyond the water. No one would ever think of looking there. We have frightened the Kaffirs with tales of ghosts, and anyhow, we are watching their movements continually."

He stayed with me while I dined, and then departed, leaving me, among other things, half a dozen candles which, duly warned, I tucked under my pillow and mattress.

I slept again for a long time, and woke suddenly with a feeling of movement about me. Something seemed to be pulling at my pillow. I put out my hand quickly. There was a perfect scurry. The rats were at the candles. I rescued the candles in time, and lighted one. Luckily for me, I have no horror of rats as such, and being reassured by their evident timidity, I was not particularly



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uneasy. All the same, the three days I passed in the mine were not among the most pleasant which my memory re-illuminates. The patter of little feet and a perceptible sense of stir and scurry were continuous. Once I was waked up from a doze by one actually galloping across me. On the candle being lighted these beings became invisible.

The next day—if you can call it day—arrived in due course. This was December 14, and the third day since I had escaped from the State Model Schools. It was relieved by a visit from the two Scottish miners, with whom I had a long confabulation. I then learned, to my surprise, that the mine was only about two hundred feet deep.

There were parts of it, said Mac, where one could see the daylight up a disused shaft. Would I like to take a turn around the old workings and have a glimmer? We passed an hour or two wandering round and up and down these subterranean galleries, and spent a quarter of an hour near the bottom of the shaft, where, grey and faint, the light of the sun and of the upper world was discerned. On this promenade I saw numbers of rats. They seemed rather nice little beasts, quite white, with dark eyes which I was assured in the daylight were a bright pink. Three years afterwards a British officer on duty in the district wrote to me that he had heard my statement at a lecture about the white rats and their pink eyes, and thought it was the limit of mendacity. He had taken the trouble to visit the mine and see for himself, and he proceeded to apologise for having doubted my truthfulness.

On the 15th Mr. Howard announced that the hue and cry seemed to be dying away. No trace of the fugitive had been discovered throughout the mining district. The talk among the Boer officials was now that I must be hiding at the house of some British sympathiser in Pretoria. They did not believe that it was possible I could have got out of the town. In these circumstances

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he thought that I might come up and have a walk on the veldt that night, and that if all was quiet the next morning I might shift my quarters to the back room of the office. On the one hand he seemed reassured, and on the other increasingly excited by the adventure. Accordingly, I had a fine stroll in the glorious fresh air and moonlight, and thereafter, anticipating slightly our programme, I took up my quarters behind packing-cases in the inner room of the office. Here I remained for three more days, walking each night on the endless plain with Mr. Howard or his assistant.

On the 16th, the fifth day of escape, Mr. Howard informed me he had made a plan to get me out of the country. The mine was connected with the railway by a branch line. In the neighbourhood of the mine there lived a Dutchman, Burgener by name, who was sending a consignment of wool to Delagoa Bay on the 19th. This gentleman was well disposed to the British. He had been approached by Mr. Howard, had been made a party to our secret, and was willing to assist. Mr. Burgener's wool was packed in great bales and would fill two or three large trucks. These trucks were to be loaded at the mine's siding. The bales could be so packed as to leave a small place in the centre of the truck in which I could be concealed. A tarpaulin would be fastened over each truck after it had been loaded, and it was very unlikely indeed that, if the fastenings were found intact, it would be removed at the frontier. Did I agree to take this chance?

I was more worried about this than almost anything that had happened to me so far in my adventure. When by extraordinary chance one has gained some great advantage or prize and actually had it in one's possession and been enjoying it for several days, the idea of losing it becomes almost insupportable. I had really come to count upon freedom as a certainty, and the idea of having to put myself in a position in which I should be perfectly

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helpless, without a move of any kind, absolutely at the caprice of a searching party at the frontier, was profoundly harassing. Rather than face this ordeal I would much have preferred to start off on the veldt with a pony and a guide, and far from the haunts of man to make my way march by march beyond the wide territories of the Boer Republic. However, in the end I accepted the proposal of my generous rescuer, and arrangements were made accordingly.

I should have been still more anxious if I could have read some of the telegrams which were reaching English newspapers. For instance :—

Pretoria, December 13.—Though Mr. Churchill's escape was cleverly executed there is little chance of his being able to cross the border.

Pretoria, December 14.—It is reported that Mr. Winston Churchill has been captured at the border railway station of Komati Poort.

Lourenço Marques, December 16.—It is reported that Mr. Churchill has been captured at Waterval Boven.

London, December 16.—With reference to the escape from Pretoria of Mr. Winston Churchill, fears are expressed that he may be captured again before long and if so may probably be shot ;

or if I had read the description of myself and the reward for my recapture which were now widely distributed or posted along the railway line (a facsimile of which is given on the opposite page).

I am glad I knew nothing of all this.

The afternoon of the 18th dragged slowly away. I remember that I spent the greater part of it reading Stevenson's Kidnapped. Those thrilling pages which describe the escape of David Balfour and Alan Breck in the glens awakened sensations with which I was only too familiar. To be a fugitive, to be a hunted man, to be

£ 25...

(vijf en twintig pond stg.)  
belooning uitgeloofs door  
de Sub-Commissie van Wijk V  
voor den Specialem Constatabel  
dezes wijk, die den ontvluchte  
Krijgsgevangene  
Churchill  
levens of dood te dezes kantons  
aflevert. —

Naamens de Sub-Comm  
Wijk V  
Lodde Haas  
Sec.

Translation.

£ 25

(Twenty-five Pounds stg.) REWARD is offered by the Sub-Commission of the fifth division, on behalf of the Special Constable of the said division, to anyone who brings the escaped prisoner of war

**CHURCHILL,**

dead or alive to this office.

For the Sub-Commission of the fifth division.

(Signed) LODK. de HAAS, Sec

NOTE.—The Original Reward for the arrest of Winston Churchill on his escape from Pretoria, posted on the Government House at Pretoria, brought to England by the Hon. Henry Masson, and is now the property of W. R. Burton.

"wanted," is a mental experience by itself. The risks of the battlefield, the hazards of the bullet or the shell are one thing. Having the police after you is another. The need for concealment and deception breeds an actual sense of guilt very undermining to morale. Feeling that at any moment the officers of the law may present themselves or any stranger may ask the questions, "Who are you?" "Where do you come from?" "Where are you going?"—to which questions no satisfactory answer could be given—gnawed the structure of self-confidence. I dreaded in every fibre the ordeal which awaited me at Komati Poort and which I must impotently and passively endure if I was to make good my escape from the enemy.

In this mood I was startled by the sound of rifle-shots close at hand, one after another at irregular intervals. A sinister explanation flashed through my mind. The Boers had come! Howard and his handful of Englishmen were in open rebellion in the heart of the enemy's country! I had been strictly enjoined upon no account to leave my hiding-place behind the packing-cases in any circumstances whatever, and I accordingly remained there in great anxiety. Presently it became clear that the worst had not happened. The sounds of voices and presently of laughter came from the office. Evidently a conversation amicable, sociable in its character was in progress. I resumed my companionship with Alan Breck. At last the voices died away, and then after an interval my door was opened and Mr. Howard's pale, sombre face appeared, suffused by a broad grin. He relocked the door behind him, and walked delicately towards me, evidently in high glee.

"The Field Cornet has been here," he said. "No, he was not looking for you. He says they caught you at Waterval Boven yesterday. But I didn't want him messing about, so I challenged him to a rifle match at bottles. He won two pounds off me and has gone away delighted."

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"It is all fixed up for to-night," he added.

"What do I do?" I asked.

"Nothing. You simply follow me when I come for you."

At two o'clock on the morning of the 19th I awaited, fully dressed, the signal. The door opened. My host appeared. He beckoned. Not a word was spoken on either side. He led the way through the front office to the siding where three large bogie trucks stood. Three figures, evidently Dewsnap and the miners, were strolling about in different directions in the moonlight. A gang of Kaffirs were busy lifting an enormous bale into the rear-most truck. Howard strolled along to the first truck and walked across the line past the end of it. As he did so he pointed with his left hand. I nipped on to the buffers and saw before me a hole between the wool bales and the end of the truck, just wide enough to squeeze into. From this there led a narrow tunnel formed of wool bales into the centre of the truck. Here was a space wide enough to lie in, high enough to sit up in. In this I took up my abode.

Three or four hours later, when gleams of daylight had reached me through the interstices of my shelter and through chinks in the boards of the flooring of the truck, the noise of an approaching engine was heard. Then came the bumping and banging of coupling-up. And again, after a further pause, we started rumbling off on our journey into the unknown.

I now took stock of my new abode and of the resources in munitions and supplies with which it was furnished. First there was a revolver. This was a moral support, though it was not easy to see in what way it could help-fully be applied to any problem I was likely to have to solve. Secondly, there were two roast chickens, some slices of meat, a loaf of bread, a melon, and three bottles of cold tea. The journey to the sea was not expected

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to take more than sixteen hours, but no one could tell what delay might occur to ordinary commercial traffic in time of war.

There was plenty of light now in the recess in which I was confined. There were many crevices in the boards composing the sides and floor of the truck, and through these the light found its way between the wool bales. Working along the tunnel to the end of the truck I found a chink which must have been nearly an eighth of an inch in width, and through which it was possible to gain a partial view of the outer world. To check the progress of the journey I had learnt by heart beforehand the names of all the stations on the route. I can remember many of them to-day: Witbank, Middelburg, Bergendal, Belfast, Dalmanutha, Machadodorp, Waterval Boven, Waterval Onder, Elands, Nooidgedacht, and so on to Komati Poort. We had by now reached the first of these. At this point the branch line from the mine joined the railway. Here, after two or three hours' delay and shunting, we were evidently coupled up to a regular train, and soon started off at a superior and very satisfactory pace.

All day long we travelled eastward through the Transvaal; when darkness fell we were laid up for the night at a station which, according to my reckoning, was Waterval Boven. We had accomplished nearly half of our journey. But how long should we wait on this siding? It might be for days; it would certainly be until the next morning. During all the dragging hours of the day I had lain on the floor of the truck occupying my mind as best I could, painting bright pictures of the pleasures of freedom, of the excitement of rejoining the Army, of the triumph of a successful escape—but haunted also perpetually by anxieties about the search at the frontier, an ordeal inevitable and constantly approaching. Now another apprehension laid hold upon me. I wanted to go to sleep. Indeed, I did not think I could possibly keep

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awake. But if I slept I might snore ! And if I snored while the train was at rest in the silent siding, I might be heard. And if I were heard ! I decided in principle that it was only prudent to abstain from sleep, and shortly afterwards fell into a blissful slumber from which I was awakened the next morning by the banging and jerking of the train as the engine was again coupled to it.

Between Waterval Boven and Waterval Onder there is a very steep descent which the locomotive accomplishes by means of a rack and pinion. We ground our way down this at three or four miles an hour, and this feature made my reckoning certain that the next station was, in fact, Waterval Onder. All this day, too, we rattled through the enemy's country, and late in the afternoon we reached the dreaded Komati Poort. Peeping through my chink, I could see this was a considerable place, with numerous tracks of rails and several trains standing on them. Numbers of people were moving about. There were many voices and much shouting and whistling. After a preliminary inspection of the scene I retreated, as the train pulled up, into the very centre of my fastness, and covering myself up with a piece of sacking, lay flat on the floor of the truck and awaited developments with a beating heart.

Three or four hours passed, and I did not know whether we had been searched or not. Several times people had passed up and down the train talking in Dutch. But the tarpaulins had not been removed, and no special examination seemed to have been made of the truck. Meanwhile darkness had come on, and I had to resign myself to an indefinite continuance of my uncertainties. It was tantalising to be held so long in jeopardy after all these hundreds of miles had been accomplished, and I was now within a few hundred yards of the frontier. Again I wondered about the dangers of snoring. But in the end I slept without mishap.



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We were still stationary when I awoke. Perhaps they were searching the train so thoroughly that there was consequently a great delay ! Alternatively, perhaps we were forgotten on the siding and would be left there for days or weeks. I was greatly tempted to peer out, but I resisted. At last, at eleven o'clock, we were coupled up, and almost immediately started. If I had been right in thinking that the station in which we had passed the night was Komati Poort, I was already in Portuguese territory. But perhaps I had made a mistake. Perhaps I had miscounted. Perhaps there was still another station before the frontier. Perhaps the search still impended. But all these doubts were dispelled when the train arrived at the next station. I peered through my chink and saw the uniform caps of the Portuguese officials on the platform and the name Resana Garcia painted on a board. I restrained all expression of my joy until we moved on again. Then, as we rumbled and banged along, I pushed my head out of the tarpaulin and sang and shouted and crowed at the top of my voice. Indeed, I was so carried away by thankfulness and delight that I fired my revolver two or three times in the air as a *feu de joie*. None of these follies led to any evil results.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached Lourenço Marques. My train ran into a goods yard, and a crowd of Kaffirs advanced to unload it. I thought the moment had now come for me to quit my hiding-place, in which I had passed nearly three anxious and uncomfortable days. I had already thrown out every vestige of food and had removed all traces of my occupation. I now slipped out at the end of the truck between the couplings, and mingling unnoticed with the Kaffirs and loafers in the yard—which my slovenly and unkempt appearance well fitted me to do—I strolled my way towards the gates and found myself in the streets of Lourenço Marques.

Burgener was waiting outside the gates. We exchanged glances. He turned and walked off into the town, and I

## AN ESCAPE FROM THE BOERS

followed twenty yards behind. We walked through several streets and turned a number of corners. Presently he stopped and stood for a moment gazing up at the roof of the opposite house. I looked in the same direction, and there—blest vision !—I saw floating the gay colours of the Union Jack. It was the British Consulate.

The secretary of the British Consul evidently did not expect my arrival.

“Be off,” he said. “The Consul cannot see you to-day. Come to this office at nine to-morrow, if you want anything.”

At this I became so angry, and repeated so loudly that I insisted on seeing the Consul personally at once, that that gentleman himself looked out of the window and finally came down to the door and asked me my name. From that moment every resource of hospitality and welcome was at my disposal. A hot bath, clean clothing, an excellent dinner, means of telegraphing—all I could want.

I devoured the file of newspapers which was placed before me. Great events had taken place since I had climbed the wall of the State Model Schools. The Black Week of the Boer War had descended on the British Army. General Gatacre at Stormberg, Lord Methuen at Magersfontein, and Sir Redvers Buller at Colenso, had all suffered staggering defeats, and casualties on a scale unknown to England since the Crimean War. All this made me eager to rejoin the Army, and the Consul himself was no less anxious to get me out of Lourenço Marques, which was full of Boers and Boer sympathisers. Happily the weekly steamer was leaving for Durban that very evening ; in fact, it might almost be said it ran in connection with my train. On this steamer I decided to embark.

The news of my arrival had spread like wildfire through the town, and while we were at dinner the Consul was at first disturbed to see a group of strange

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figures in the garden. These, however, turned out to be Englishmen fully armed who had hurried up to the Consulate determined to resist any attempt at my recapture. Under the escort of these patriotic gentlemen I marched safely through the streets to the quay, and at about ten o'clock was on salt water in the steamship *Induna*.

I reached Durban to find myself a popular hero. I was received as if I had won a great victory. The harbour was decorated with flags. Bands and crowds thronged the quays. The Admiral, the General, the Mayor pressed on board to grasp my hand. I was nearly torn to pieces by enthusiastic kindness. Whirled along on the shoulders of the crowd, I was carried to the steps of the town hall, where nothing would content them but a speech, which after a becoming reluctance I was induced to deliver. Sheaves of telegrams from all parts of the world poured in upon me, and I started that night for the Army in a blaze of triumph.

Here, too, I was received with the greatest goodwill. I took up my quarters in the very platelayer's hut within one hundred yards of which I had a little more than a month before been taken prisoner, and there with the rude plenty of the Natal campaign celebrated by a dinner to many friends my good fortune and Christmas Eve.

WINSTON CHURCHILL, *My Early Life* (1930)

## WAR IN THE AIR

WE wanted to drop a bomb. It was not strictly our business, and our machines were not fitted with bomb-racks ; but there were bombs in the store, and we felt that they should be dropped.

We lay on the aerodrome in the sunny grass with the map before us.

"First," I said, "on what shall we drop a bomb?"

## WAR IN THE AIR

"There is a house beyond Pozières," said Pip. "It is not demolished. It might be a dump. It probably could do with a bomb." (He is dead now, but I remember how he looked at me sideways, finger on map, and smiled.)

"We must calculate the height and speed and allow for the wind."

He rolled over on his back and, arms behind head, blinked in the July sunshine.

"Do you know how bombs work?" he asked.

"No; but I s'pose we can find out. There ought to be a fuse, with a pin to pull out, or something."

We considered it carefully. It was the third day of the Somme battle, and anything that could be done ought to be done. Besides, a bomb!—it might do any amount of damage. . . .

We will fly this way. . . . Four thousand feet. . . . Seventy miles an hour. . . . Measure it carefully. . . . Allow for the wind. . . . We'll drop it from there.

We went to the Major.

"We want to drop a bomb," we said.

"All right," he said. "Where?" And we told him.

That afternoon we set out. The Sergeant stood by nursing the bomb. He lifted it up and placed it gingerly on Pip's knees. It was a twenty-pound bomb, and Pip held it in his arms like a baby.

"It can't go off, I suppose, can it, Sergeant?" he inquired mildly.

"Not till you pull out the pin, sir," replied the Sergeant. "But mind how you chuck it overboard, sir. See it doesn't touch anything."

He thought we were mad. (On reflection, we certainly were.) We climbed up to the lines. When we got over the spot, I turned and nodded. Pip pulled out the pin and dumped the baby overboard. We circled and watched it falling. Then we lost sight of it and looked at the house. It was still there. Then—a flash and a

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cloud of dust about a hundred yards away. We returned home, strangely elated.

“Did you hit it?” said the Major.

“No.”

“I didn’t think you would.” He was reflective. Still, you dropped it. That’s something.”

For days on patrol we used to look for the crater it had made. It seemed a friendly crater. Then we forgot it ; but we never bothered to drop another bomb.

Next day we were up at 3 A.M. and took the air at four. Dawn over the trenches, everything misty and still above, with the prospect of heat to come ; even the war seemed to pause, taking a deep, cool morning breath before plunging into action. We were out to find the exact position at Boisselle, for even now, on the fourth day of the offensive, the Corps Intelligence did not seem clear on the point. We sailed over the mines and called for flares with our klaxon. After a minute one solitary flare spurted up, crimson, from the lip of the crater. It looked forlorn, that solitary little beacon, in the immense pitted miles of earth around. We came down to five hundred feet and sailed over it, trying to distinguish the crouching khaki figures, huddled in their improvised trenches in the khaki-coloured earth. It was not easy. We crossed the crater going north, wheeled south again to come back over it, when suddenly there was a crash, and the whole machine shook, as if at the next moment it would wrench itself to pieces.

I thought we had been hit by a passing shell. In a flash I pulled back the throttle and switched off. The vibration lessened ; but we still shook fearfully. Now ! Where to land ? Five hundred feet over the front line, the earth an expanse of contiguous shell-holes ! We should certainly crash, perhaps catch fire, right on the line ! Such thoughts raced through my head as I looked frantically for some spot less battered than the rest.

## WAR IN THE AIR

There was a place ! Right underneath me ! I dived at it, and the speed of the machine rose to a hundred miles an hour. Of course we could never hope to stay in that one green patch. We should overshoot, crash in the trenches beyond ; but at five hundred feet there is no time to change your mind. You select your spot for better or worse and stick to it. So we dived.

"What's the matter ?" shouted Pip from behind me.

"Cylinder blown off, I think," I shouted. (Actually it was a connecting-rod which had crystallised and snapped in half.)

"Undo your belt !" I yelled. I didn't want him to be pinioned under the machine when it caught fire, if it did catch fire.

By now we were down to a hundred feet, and the contours of the earth below took on detailed shape. I saw—God be praised !—that the green patch that had caught my eye was the side of a steep hill. There was no wind. I swung the machine sideways and pulled her round to head up the slope. She zoomed grandly up the hillside. The speed lessened. Now we were just over the ground, swooping uphill, like a seagull on a steep Devon plough. Back and back I pulled the stick. The hill rose up before me, and at last she stalled, perched like a bird on the only patch of hill free of shell-craters, hopped three yards, and stopped—intact !

With a gasp of amazement and relief—for no one could have hoped to have got down in such a place undamaged—we jumped out of the machine. It was Pip's twenty-first birthday. Suddenly I remembered it. "Many happy returns !" I said.

We stood looking at the machine—for nothing, perhaps, is quite so awkward and useless as an aeroplane that can't fly. Evidently we should have to get a new engine put in. Equally evident it would be quite impossible to fly the machine out of this tenement patch of turf. It would have to be dismantled. As if the

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thought had entered other heads than our own, at that moment came the "wheeeeee . . . wheeee . . . whee—ow . . . whe—ow . . . whow . . whow . whow . . . zonk !" of a German shell. They were evidently going to dismantle it for us. The shell fell wide. We dived for a trench beyond, and waited. Two more shells came over. Then silence. They had given it up. Well . . . we'd better get back to the aerodrome and have some brekker. It was five o'clock.

From the air we could have found our way home from any part of the line ; but the earth was a strange country. We set off along the duckboarding at the bottom of a deep communication trench, unable to see over the top. We turned left at a junction, right at another. They were all deserted. We were lost. So we climbed out of the trench and walked down towards a neighbouring copse, where we could hear in the distance the sound of orders and the rattle of accoutrements. A battalion of infantry was waiting there to go up into the line. An officer, who had seen us come down, directed us back on the road to Albert.

We stood a moment chatting with him. The imminence of action seemed to leave him unperturbed. His men sat round resting in attitudes of dejection or repose, dun figures bowed under the heavy strappings of their kits, hats pushed back, cigarettes hanging from their lips. They sat about on the fallen tree-trunks, on overturned wagons, on dud shells, silent and resigned in that blasted wood under the glory of the summer morning. Then the thunder of the guns began, south at the Somme, and rose and rose as the nearer batteries took it up. It was just like jungle drums beating the rhythm of tremendous news, rising, falling, echoing, repeating, till the whole air was shaking with the imminent event. The officer looked at his watch. The men rose and shook themselves into order.

" Good luck ! "

## WAR IN THE AIR

" Good luck ! We'll keep a watch out for you on patrol ! "

We turned away up the hill towards Albert, he through the gully of the wood up towards the line.

We trudged along in our heavy sheep-skin thigh-boots, long leather coats, mufflers and helmets—unsuitable walking kit for a breathless sunny morning. At last we emerged out on to a sort of road, badly shell-holed, almost impassable for wheeled traffic. We marked it on our map, for, somehow or other, the men were going to have to get a tender along it, dismantle the Parasol, and tow it back to the aerodrome. It was going to be tricky. Once out of the hollow we were glad enough to pause and take our bearings.

How different it all looked from the ground ! We could see the contours of the trenches, could realise why this point had been easy to carry in the attack, how that one was well-nigh impregnable ; but more than this, we could inspect at close quarters the fury of the bombardment. It was a desolation, unimaginable from the air. The trees by the roadside were riven and splintered, their branches blown hither and thither, and the cracked stumps stuck up uselessly into the air, flanking the road, forlorn, like a byway to Hell. The farms were a mass of débris, the garden walls heaps of rubble, the cemeteries had their crosses and their wire wreaths blown horribly askew. Every five square yards held a crater. The earth had no longer its smooth familiar face. It was diseased, pocked, rancid, stinking of death in the morning sun.

Yet (oh, the catch at the heart !), among the devastated cottages, the tumbled, twisted trees, the desecrated cemeteries, opening candid, to the blue heaven, the poppies were growing ! Clumps of crimson poppies, thrusting out from the lips of craters, straggling in drifts between the hummocks, undaunted by the desolation, heedless of human fury and stupidity, Flanders poppies, basking in the sun !



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As we stood gazing, a lark rose up from among them and mounted, shrilling over the diapason of the guns. We listened, watching, and then, I remember, trudged slowly on down the road without a word. That morning seems stranger than most to me now, for Pip is dead, twenty years dead, and I can still hear the lark over the guns, the flop and shuffle of our rubber-soled flying-boots on the dusty road ; I can remember, set it down, that here on this page it may remain a moment longer than his brief mortality. For what? To make an epitaph, a little literary tombstone, for a young forgotten man.

For months we worked together daily on patrol. His life was in my hands a hundred times, and once, at least, mine was in his. He was the darling of the Flight, for he had a sort of gentle, smiling warmth about him that we loved. Besides, from the old rattling piano, out of tune, with a note gone here and there, he would coax sweet music—songs of the day, scraps of old tunes, Chopin studies, the *Liebestraum*, *Marche Militaire*. Youth and the sentiment attaching to those days obscure my judgment, but I believe that he had talent. Well, that does not matter now, and it did not matter then. He had enough for us, to make us sit quietly in the evening, there in that dingy room where the oil lamp hung on a string thick with flies, and listen.

In September I went on leave ; Pip carried on with another pilot. One morning, on the dawn patrol, they, flying low in the arc of our own gunfire, intercepted a passing shell. The machine and both the boys were blown to bits.

Bodie was the Gadget King. He couldn't leave his machine alone. The carpenters and riggers were always making him something—a rack for his Very lights ; a box for sandwiches ; a special gun mounting ; extra cases for spare drums ; a new sort of wind-screen ;

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special seat-cushions, and so on. He was a sort of modern White Knight. The classic conversation of this Bold Adventurer was typical of him :—

*The White Knight.* Yes, it's a very good bee-hive. One of the best of its kind, but not a single bee has come near it yet, and the other thing is a mouse-trap. I suppose the mice keep the bees out or the bees keep the mice out. I don't know which.

*Alice.* I was wondering what the mouse-trap was for. It isn't very likely there'd be any mice on a horse's back.

*The White Knight.* Not very likely, perhaps, but if they do come, I don't choose to have them running about.

So it was with Bodie. He chose to be prepared for every eventuality. At one period of the Somme offensive he used to go up solo because he had equipped his machine with so many Lewis guns that it was incapable of lifting a passenger as well. He had one firing forward over the top of the propeller. Another was fixed behind him, shooting upwards over his tail, in case anyone should be so rash as to attack him from the rear. A third fired downwards under his tail—presumably, in the words of the White Knight, “to guard against the bites of sharks.” None of these guns had any sights, and indeed it would have been almost impossible to hit anything with them. But evidently Bodie, in some strange nightmare, had seen himself surrounded by enemy aircraft and imagined that by pulling the plug of all three guns at once he might manage to “brown” half a dozen.

The gun craze lasted about a week, and then the Squadron Commander gently but firmly told Bodie that his aeroplane was not a Christmas tree and that he really must get down to work ! The guns were dismantled and Bodie was forced to exercise his ingenuity again.

Now it so happened that an infantry battalion had come down from the lines to rest, and was quartered in the village. One of the sergeants had a case of rifle

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grenades. These were small bombs with a long stalk which slipped down into the rifle barrel. You fired the rifle and the bullet forced the stalk, with the bomb on the end of it, out of the barrel, and theoretically it burst on hitting the enemy trenches. His remarks about them were very much to the point: "These 'ere bloody bombs are no bloody good! Either they bloody well burst before you can shoot them off, or they don't bloody well burst at all!" And he added further technical information about burst rifle barrels and wounded men.

This was an opportunity after Bodie's heart. He swapped a pair of flying-gloves (which the sergeant thought might keep him warm in the front line) for the case of rifle grenades and had it brought down to the hangar, where its explosive possibilities made it much respected by all the air mechanics! Not so by Bodie. A case of bombs which could be induced to go off had the sort of lure a mouse-trap must have to one of those experienced mice who know how it works! He proceeded to cast about for a method of utilising his consignment of bombs for the discomfiture of the enemy.

Having hit on a plan, he sent for the carpenters and riggers and instructed them to make two small racks of three-ply wood with five holes in each, just large enough to hold the body of the grenade. In the Morane Parasol the observer's seat was immediately behind the pilot, and just behind and below it again was a small cupboard which held the wireless set. The two bomb-racks were screwed on to the outside of the fuselage, one on either side, level with the wireless. The stalks of the grenades were unscrewed and replaced by pieces of tape which, by a complicated system of pulleys and guides, were led through and attached to a hook in the pilot's seat. Unfasten them, and the weight of the grenades would pull away the tapes and they would fall. Simple! But the rifle grenade was quite harmless until the fuse-pin in the head was removed, after which nothing could stop it

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going off in about three seconds. So Bodie devised a further system of pieces of string to withdraw the pins. In the cockpit, when all was complete, there were therefore ten pieces of string to release the fuses, and ten pieces of tape to release the grenades.

This piece of super-gadgetry completed, Bodie could hardly contain himself for delight. He invited everyone to inspect the ingenuity of his contrivance, and decided to sally forth that afternoon and drop these ten grenades on the Kaiser himself (for there was a rumour he was up at the line). Failing the All Highest, he was going to "bloody well drop them on the first thing he saw," and when a machine came back and reported Hun reinforcements moving out of Bapaume, some ten miles behind the lines, nothing could restrain him from departing immediately to blow them up.

"You see," he remarked naïvely, "they will never expect me to drop anything on them."

His accomplice in this dastardly scheme was a certain good-looking youth with wavy hair and a beautiful moustache. He was an observer and, strangely enough, did not seem very much concerned at the idea of flying over Germany with this Heath Robinson paraphernalia.

The machine was wheeled out, the grenades placed in position, the tapes adjusted, and at last all was ready. As they were about to leave, Bodie nearly upset the whole expedition by catching his foot in the gear as he climbed into the cockpit.

"Look out ! Look out !" yelled a mechanic. "He's gone and pulled the pins out !"

Bodie remained suspended, with one leg in the air, like an ecstatic puppy at his first lamp-post, saying in a rather quavering voice, "It's all right, it's all right !"

When three seconds had elapsed and the aeroplane had not turned into a sort of Brock's benefit, they swung up the engine and were heartily glad to see the machine disappear "This side up with care" in the distance.

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It was a beautiful evening, and nearly all of us were sitting about on some baulks of timber near the sheds smoking, talking, and waiting for the last of the afternoon patrol to return. At last, in the distance, a machine was seen staggering in a sort of drunken roll towards the aerodrome.

"Christ Almighty!" said the men who first saw it. "What the hell's happened to her?" As the machine came nearer it was seen that the fabric on one side of the fuselage had been ripped off and was flapping wildly in the wind. Needless to say, it was Bodie returning from his gallant attempt to Win the War.

When he landed there was a general stampede to the machine. The first thing noticeable was the good-looking face of the observer, who had, in this incredibly short space of time, grown a beard, consisting of small pieces of red vulcanite which were sticking into all parts of his chin and cheeks. He climbed out of the machine, using the sort of language which will remain for ever unprintable, and a cheer went up when it was seen that his posterior had been the recipient of the disintegrated components of the wireless set! Condensers and transformers, one end well embedded in his anatomy, waved jovially in the air. His breeches were torn, his coat in ribbons. He was badly shaken, trembling and laughing.

"What happened? What happened?" And when the first convulsions of merriment had died down:

"One of those bloody bombs," he said, cautiously rubbing his backside, "went off."

So much was obvious. The fuselage was a wreck. One of the longerons had been blown right through. Two or three struts and a dozen wires had been snapped. By a miracle the controls had remained intact. Bodie climbed out of the machine. He surveyed the wreckage with an expression of pained surprise.

"It's a pity about that," he remarked. And then he told the story. He had flown over to Bapaume and

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failed to find the enemy reinforcements. However, he had spotted a number of Huns in a trench and came down to do his deadly work.

"I'm going to drop them," he shouted. "Look out!" And the observer did!

Bodie withdrew the strings, converting ten harmless grenades into ten extremely dangerous ones, and a second later released the tapes. They all fell clear (incidentally doing no damage whatever where they fell) except one, which got caught, and hung there dangling on its tape. A second later it burst.

It was two days before the machine was serviceable again. In the interval Bodie was busy planning a more complicated apparatus to drop double the quantity of grenades. But one of the Flight-Sergeants, either on receipt of instructions or else from motives of self-preservation (he might have had to go up with Bodie himself), privily took the case of grenades out of the sheds one night and had it dropped in the river near by.

Bodie never quite got over its disappearance, and used to wander about muttering vague imprecations about sabotage in the Royal Flying Corps.

As I turned to come back from the lines one evening, I saw to the north of Thiepval a long creeping wráith of yellow mist. I stared for a moment before I realised: Gas! Then, instinctively, although I was a mile above the earth, I pulled back the stick to climb higher, away from the horror.

In the light westerly wind it slid slowly down the German trenches, creeping pantherlike over the scarred earth, curling down into dugouts, coiling and uncoiling at the wind's whim. Men were dying there, under me, from a whiff of it: not dying quickly, nor even maimed or shattered, but dying whole, retching and vomiting blood and guts; and those who lived would be wrecks with seared, poisoned lungs, rotten for life.

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I stared at the yellow drift, hypnotised. I can see it at this moment as clearly as I could that day, for it <sup>just</sup> remains with me as the most pregnant memory of the war. It was, in fact, the symbol of our enlightened twentieth century : science, in the pursuit of knowledge, being exploited by a world without standards or scruples, spiritually bankrupt.

To-day all treaties, conventions, leagues, all words of honour, contracts, obligations are evidently worth nothing once the lust for power has infected a nation. Within twenty years of these days of which I write, every country, under a veneer of self-righteous nationalism, is preparing, with increasing ingenuity and deadlier weapons, a greater Armageddon—all the while protesting their love of peace. People who cannot learn from their mistakes are damned—"the state of them who love death more than life." What have we learned from ours? We are, collectively, the most evil and destructive of human creatures. We back up our greeds and jealousies with religion and patriotism. Our Christian priests bless the launching of battleships, our youth is urged to die gloriously "for King and Country." We even write on the tomb of our Unknown Warrior that he died "for God"! What a piece of impudent and blasphemous nonsense to write in the House of Him whose greatest saying was : "This is my commandment, that ye love one another."

The next war will see that yellow drift not stealing down into front-line dugouts, but along London streets. My breed, the pilots, whose war has been more chivalrous and clean-handed than any other, will be ordered to do violence to the civilian population. We shall drop the gas bombs and poison the reservoirs. We shall kill the women and children. Of course, the thing is insane ; but then if the world submits to the rule of homicidal maniacs, it deserves to be destroyed.

For, intellectually, the problem is not insoluble, though

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it is vast and has been rushed on us in under a hundred years, that is practically instantaneously. Science is the first cause ; but scientists wash their hands of it, saying they are bound to advance knowledge but cannot control the uses men put it to. But if there is to be any safety in the world dangerous inventions will have to be protected as carefully as dangerous poisons. To nearly every modern problem there is an intellectual answer ; but that, unfortunately, is not enough, for we have passions as well as minds, and they are more difficult to educate.

We are aware, for instance, that the incredibly rapid development of communications has telescoped space and time. We know that prosperity is interdependent, that currencies are linked, that commerce is international. But only a few (mainly business men whose pockets are affected) take all this for granted. They demand, as a matter of common sense, that international relations should have international control. For the rest it is an ideal, not an urgent practical necessity. The general public remains isolationist, patriotic, aware (like Nurse Cavell) that patriotism is not enough, but aghast at the problem of co-ordinating and controlling the life of the planet.

So vital a division puts everything in a flux. Nobody knows where to pin their faith, so they believe nothing. Moral and social standards are confused. Disillusion, introspection, defeatism are the lot of all those who can live only by the yardstick of black and white. The fear of feeling the ground slipping from under their feet drives whole nations back into mediaeval despotism. They will submit to anything sooner than face this social relativity where nothing is straight, nothing constant, nothing sure. But emulating the ostrich, though it may bring relief for a space, does not solve the problem. It leads straight back to self-immolation on the altar of out-worn patriotism, that is to barbarism.



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Thus the rational solution, as yet unsupported by the emotional drive which would make it a common faith, a cardinal necessity not to be denied, drifts in the doldrums, while the hysterical crew wring their hands and pray for a fair wind, instead of manning the boats and rowing the ship out to the Trades.

And all this arises because the ideal remains apparently unattainable, nebulous ; it has not crystallised into a single urge. Yet this is clear and simple : World state, world currency, world language. It will demand new disciplines, new allegiances, new ideals. Probably two or three more world wars will be necessary to break down the innate hostility to such changes ; but that is the way it must go. The days will come when the nations, sick of fighting themselves to a standstill, will claim the protection of the International Guard as we claim the right to a policeman. It is a question only of degree. Peace and security are civic virtues : those who disturb them must be quickly dealt with, and, if their offence is serious enough, put out of the way.

It is a fight between intellect and appetite, between the international idea and armaments. The latter will probably win the first two or three rounds ; but, if civilisation is to survive, the idea must win in the end. Meanwhile, if a few million people have to die violent deaths, that cannot be helped. Nature is exceedingly wasteful.

CECIL LEWIS, *Sagittarius Rising* (1936)

## SEVEN YEARS' HARD

At sixteen years and nine months, but looking four or five years older, and adorned with real whiskers which the scandalised Mother abolished within one hour of beholding, I found myself at Bombay, where I was born, moving among sights and smells that made me deliver

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in the vernacular sentences whose meaning I knew not. Other Indian-born boys have told me how the same thing happened to them.

There were yet three or four days' rail to Lahore, where my people lived. After these, my English years fell away, nor ever, I think, came back in full strength.

That was a joyous home-coming. For—consider !—I had returned to a Father and Mother of whom I had seen but little since my sixth year. I might have found my Mother “the sort of woman *I* don't care for,” as in one terrible case that I know ; and my Father intolerable. But the Mother proved more delightful than all my imaginings or memories. My Father was not only a mine of knowledge and help, but a humorous, tolerant and expert fellow-craftsman. I had my own room in the house ; my servant, handed over to me by my father's servant, whose son he was, with the solemnity of a marriage-contract ; my own horse, cart and groom ; my own office-hours and direct responsibilities ; and—oh joy !—my own office-box, just like my Father's, which he took daily to the Lahore School of Art and Museum. I do not remember the smallest friction in any detail of our lives. We delighted more in each other's society than in that of strangers ; and when my sister came out, a little later, our cup was filled to the brim. Not only were we happy, but we knew it.

But the work was heavy. I represented fifty per cent of the “editorial staff” of the one daily paper of the Punjab—a small sister of the great *Pioneer* at Allahabad under the same proprietorship. And a daily paper comes out every day even though fifty per cent of the staff have fever.

My Chief took me in hand, and for three years or so I loathed him. He had to break me in, and I knew nothing. What he suffered on my account I cannot tell ; but the little that I ever acquired of accuracy, the habit of trying at least to verify references, and some knack of

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sticking to desk-work, I owed wholly to Stephen Wheeler.

I never worked less than ten hours and seldom more than fifteen per diem ; and as our paper came out in the evening did not see the midday sun except on Sundays. I had fever, too, regular and persistent, to which I added for a while chronic dysentery. Yet I discovered that a man can work with a temperature of 104, even, though next day he has to ask the office who wrote the article. Our native Foreman, on the News side, Mian Rukn Din, a Muhammedan gentleman of kind heart and infinite patience, whom I never saw unequal to a situation, was my loyal friend throughout. From the modern point of view I suppose the life was not fit for a dog, but my world was filled with boys, but a few years older than I, who lived utterly alone, and died from typhoid mostly at the regulation age of twenty-two. As regarding ourselves at home, if there were any dying to be done, we four were together. The rest was in the day's work, with love to sweeten all things.

Books, plays, pictures and amusements, outside what games the cold weather allowed, there were none. Transport was limited to horses and such railways as existed. This meant that one's normal radius of travel would be about six miles in any direction, and—one did not meet new white faces at every six miles. Death was always our near companion. When there was an outbreak of eleven cases of typhoid in our white community of seventy, and professional nurses had not been invented, the men sat up with the men, and the women with the women. We lost four of our invalids and thought we had done well. Otherwise, men and women dropped where they stood. Hence our custom of looking up anyone who did not appear at our daily gatherings.

The dead of all times were about us—in the vast forgotten Moslem cemeteries round the Station, where one's horse's hoof of a morning might break through to the corpse below ; skulls and bones tumbled out of our

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mud garden walls, and were turned up among the flowers by the Rains ; and at every point were tombs of the dead. Our chief picnic rendezvous and some of our public offices had been memorials to desired dead women ; and Fort Lahore, where Runjit Singh's wives lay, was a mausoleum of ghosts.

This was the setting in which my world revolved. Its centre for me—a member at seventeen—was the Punjab Club, where bachelors, for the most part, gathered to eat meals of no merit among men whose merits they knew well. My Chief was married and came there seldom, so it was mine to be told every evening of the faults of that day's issue in very simple language. Our native compositors "followed copy" without knowing one word of English. Hence glorious and sometimes obscene misprints. Our proof-readers (sometimes we had a brace of them) drank, which was expected ; but systematic and prolonged D.T. on their part gave me more than my share of their work. And in that Club and elsewhere I met none except picked men at their definite work—Civilians, Army, Education, Canals, Forestry, Engineering, Irrigation, Railways, Doctors and Lawyers—samples of each branch and each talking his own shop. It follows then that that "show of technical knowledge" for which I was blamed later came to me from the horse's mouth, even to boredom.

So soon as my paper could trust me a little, and I had behaved well at routine work, I was sent out, first for local reportings ; then to race-meetings which included curious nights in the lottery-tent. (I saw one go up in flames once, when a heated owner hove an oil-lamp at the handicapper on the night the owner was coming up for election at the Club. That was the first and last time I had seen every available black ball expended and members begging for more.) Later I described the openings of big bridges and such-like, which meant a night or two with the engineers ; floods on railways—more nights

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in the wet with wretched heads of repair gangs ; village festivals and consequent outbreaks of cholera or smallpox ; communal riots under the shadow of the Mosque of Wazir Khan, where the patient waiting troops lay in timber-yards or side-alleys till the order came to go in and hit the crowds on the feet with the gun-butt (killing in Civil Administration was then reckoned confession of failure), and the growling, flaring, creed-drunk city would be brought to hand without effusion of blood, or the appearance of any agitated Viceroy ; visits of Viceroys to neighbouring Princes on the edge of the great Indian Desert, where a man might have to wash his raw hands and face in soda-water ; reviews of Armies expecting to move against Russia next week ; receptions of an Afghan Potentate, with whom the Indian Government wished to stand well (this included a walk into the Khyber, where I was shot at, but without malice, by a rapparee who disapproved of his ruler's foreign policy) ; murder and divorce trials, and (a really filthy job) an inquiry into the percentage of lepers among the butchers who supplied beef and mutton to the European community of Lahore. (Here I first learned that crude statements of crude facts are not well seen by responsible official authorities.) It was Squeers' method of instruction, but how could I fail to be equipped with more than all I might need ? I was saturated with it, and if I tripped over detail, the Club attended to me.

~~My first bribe was offered to me at the age of nineteen~~ when I was in a Native State where, naturally, one concern of the Administration was to get more guns of honour added to the Ruler's official salute when he visited British India, and even a roving correspondent's good word might be useful. Hence in the basket of fruits (*dali* is its name) laid at my tent door each morning, a five-hundred-rupee note and a Cashmere shawl. As the sender was of high caste I returned the gift at the hands of the camp-sweeper, who was not. Upon this

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my servant, responsible to his father, and mine, for my well-being, said without emotion: "Till we get home you eat and drink from my hands." This I did.

On return to work I found my Chief had fever, and I was in sole charge. Among his editorial correspondence was a letter from this Native State setting forth the record during a few days' visit of "your reporter, a person called Kipling"; who had broken, it seemed, the decalogue in every detail. I wrote back that as Acting-Editor I had received the complaints and would investigate, but they must expect me to be biassed because I was the person complained of.

I visited the State more than once later, and there was not a cloud on our relations. I had dealt with the insult more Asiatico—which *they* understood; the ball had been returned more Asiatico—which *I* understood; and the incident had been closed.

My second bribe came when I worked under Stephen Wheeler's successor, Kay Robinson, brother of Phil Robinson who wrote *In My Indian Garden*. With him, thanks to his predecessor having licked me into some shape, my relations were genial. It was the old matter of gun-salutes again; the old machinery of the basket of fruit and shawls and money for us both, but this time left impudently on the office verandah. Kay and I wasted a happy half-hour pricking "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*" into the currency notes, mourned that we could not take the shawls, and let the matter go.

My third and most interesting bribe was when reporting a divorce case in Eurasian society. An immense brown woman penned me in a corner and offered "if I would but keep her name out of it" to give me most intimate details, which she began at once to do. I demanded her name before bargaining. "Oah! I am the Respondent. Thatt is why I ask you." It is hard to report some dramas without Ophelias if not Hamlets. But I was repaid for her anger when Counsel asked her

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if she had ever expressed a desire to dance on her husband's grave. Till then she had denied everything. "Yess," she hissed, "and I jolly-damn-well *would* too."

A soldier of my acquaintance had been sentenced to life-imprisonment for a murder which, on evidence not before the court, seemed to me rather justified. I saw him later in Lahore jail at work on some complicated arrangement of nibs with different coloured inks, stuck into a sort of loom which, drawn over paper, gave the ruling for the blank forms of financial statements. It seemed wickedly monotonous. But the spirit of man is undefeatable. "If I made a mistake of an eighth of an inch in spacing these lines, I'd throw out *all* the accounts of the Upper Punjab," said he.

As to our reading public, they were at the least as well educated as fifty per cent of our "staff"; and by force of their lives could not be stampeded or much "thrilled." Double headlines we had never heard of, nor special type, and I fear that the amount of "white" in the newspapers to-day would have struck us as common cheating. Yet the stuff we dealt in would have furnished modern journals of enterprise with almost daily sensations.

My legitimate office-work was sub-editing, which meant eternal cuttings-down of unwieldy contributions—such as discourses on abstruse questions of Revenue and Assessment from a great and wise Civilian who wrote the vilest hand that even our compositors ever saw; literary articles about Milton. (And how was I to know that the writer was a relative of one of our proprietors, who thought our paper existed to air his theories?) Here Crom Price's training in *précis*-work helped me to get swiftly at what meat there might be in the disorderly messes. There were newspaper exchanges from Egypt to Hong-Kong to be skimmed nearly every morning and, once a week, the English papers on which one drew in time of need; local correspondence from out-stations to vet for possible libels in their innocent allusions;

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“spoofing” letters from subalterns to be guarded against (twice I was trapped here) ; always, of course, the filing of cables, and woe betide an error then ! I took them down from the telephone—a primitive and mysterious power whose native operator broke every word into monosyllables. One cut-and-come-again affliction was an accursed Muscovite paper, the *Novoie Vremya*, written in French, which, for weeks and weeks, published the war diaries of Alikhanoff, a Russian General then harrying the Central Russian Khanates. He gave the name of every camp he halted at, and regularly reported that his troops warmed themselves at fires of *sax-aul*, which I suppose is perhaps sage-brush. A week after I had translated the last of the series every remembrance of it passed from my normal memory.

Ten or twelve years later, I fell sick in New York and passed through a long delirium which, by ill-chance, I remembered when I returned to life. At one stage of it I led an enormous force of cavalry mounted on red horses with brand-new leather saddles, under the glare of a green moon, across steppes so vast that they revealed the very curve of earth. We would halt at one of the camps named by Alikhanoff in his diary (I would see the name of it heaving up over the edge of the planet), where we warmed ourselves at fires of *sax-aul*, and where, scorched on one side and frozen on the other, I sat till my infernal squadrons went on again to the next fore-known halt ; and so through the list.

In 1885 a Liberal Government had come into power at Home and was acting on liberal “principle,” which so far as I have observed ends not seldom in bloodshed. Just then, it was a matter of principle that Native Judges should try white women. Native in this case meant overwhelmingly Hindu ; and the Hindu’s idea of women is not lofty. No one had asked for any such measure—least of all the Judiciary concerned. But principle is principle, though the streets swim. The European



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community were much annoyed. They went to the extremity of revolt—that is to say even the officials of the Service and their wives very often would not attend the functions and levées of the then Viceroy, a circular and bewildered recluse of religious tendencies. A pleasant English gentleman called C. P. Ilbert had been imported to father and god-father the Bill. I think he, too, was a little bewildered. Our paper, like most of the European press, began with stern disapproval of the measure, and, I fancy, published much comment and correspondence which would now be called “disloyal.”

One evening, while putting the paper to bed, I looked as usual over the leader. It was the sort of false-balanced, semi-judicial stuff that some English journals wrote about the Indian White Paper from 1932 to '34, and like them it furnished a barely disguised exposition of the Government's high ideals. In after-life one got to know that touch better, but it astonished me at the time, and I asked my Chief what it all meant. He replied, as I should have done in his place: “None of your dam' business,” and, being married, went to his home. I repaired to the Club, which, remember, was the whole of my outside world.

As I entered the long, shabby dining-room where we all sat at one table, everyone hissed. I was innocent enough to ask: “What's the joke? Who are they hissing?” “You,” said the man at my side. “Your dam' rag has rattled over the Bill.”

It is not pleasant to sit still when one is twenty while all your universe hisses you. Then uprose a Captain, our Adjutant of Volunteers, and said: “Stop that! The boy's only doing what he's paid to do.” The demonstration tailed off, but I had seen a great light. The Adjutant was entirely correct. I was a hireling, paid to do what I was paid to do, and—I did not relish the idea. Someone said kindly: “You damned young ass! Don't you know that your paper has the Government

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printing-contract?" I *did* know it, but I had never before put two and two together.

A few months later one of my two chief proprietors received the decoration that made him a Knight. Then I began to take much interest in certain smooth Civilians, who had seen good in the Government measure and had somehow been shifted out of the heat to billets in Simla. I followed under shrewd guidance, often native, the many pretty ways by which a Government can put veiled pressure on its employees in a land where every circumstance *and* relation of a man's life is public property. So, when the great and epoch-making India Bill turned up fifty years later, I felt as one re-treading the tortuous by-ways of his youth. One recognised the very phrases and assurances of the old days still doing good work, and waited, as in a dream, for the very slightly altered formulas in which those who were parting with their convictions excused themselves. Thus: "I may act as a brake, you know. At any rate I'm keeping a more extreme man out of the game." "There's no sense running counter to the inevitable,"—and all the other Devil-provided camouflage for the sinner-who-faces-both-ways.

In '85 I was made a Freemason by dispensation (Lodge Hope and Perseverance 782 E.C.), being under age, because the Lodge hoped for a good Secretary. They did not get him, but I helped, and got the Father to advise, in decorating the bare walls of the Masonic Hall with hangings after the prescription of Solomon's Temple. Here I met Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, members of the Araya and Brahmo Samaj, and a Jew tyler, who was priest and butcher to his little community in the city. So yet another world opened to me which I needed.

My Mother and Sister would go up to the Hills for the hot weather, and in due course my Father too. My own holiday came when I could be spared. Thus I often lived alone in the big house, where I commanded by choice native food, as less revolting than meat-cookery, and so

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added indigestion to my more intimate possessions.

In those months—mid-April to mid-October—one took up one's bed and walked about with it from room to room, seeking for less heated air ; or slept on the flat roof with the waterman to throw half-skinfuls of water on one's parched carcase. This brought on fever but saved heat-stroke.

Often the night got into my head as it had done in the boarding-house in the Brompton Road, and I would wander till dawn in all manner of odd places—liquor-shops, gambling and opium-dens, which are not a bit mysterious, wayside entertainments such as puppet-shows, native dances ; or in and about the narrow gullies under the Mosque of Wazir Khan for the sheer sake of looking. Sometimes, the Police would challenge, but I knew most of their officers, and many folk in some quarters knew me for the son of my Father, which in the East more than anywhere else is useful. Otherwise, the word "Newspaper" sufficed ; though I did not supply my paper with many accounts of these prowls. One would come home, just as the light broke, in some night-hawk of a hired carriage which stank of hookah-fumes, jasmine-flowers, and sandalwood ; and if the driver were moved to talk, he told one a good deal. Much of real Indian life goes on in the hot weather nights. That is why the native staff of the offices are not much use next morning. All native offices aestivate from May at least till September. Files and correspondence are then as a matter of course pitched unopened into corners, to be written up or faked when the weather gets cooler. But the English who go Home on leave, having imposed the set hours of a northern working day upon the children of children, are surprised that India does not work as they do. This is one of the reasons why autonomous India will be interesting.

And there were "wet" nights too at the Club or one Mess, when a table-full of boys, half crazed with discom-

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fort, but with just sense enough to stick to beer and bones which seldom betray, tried to rejoice and somehow succeeded. I remember one night when we ate tinned haggis with cholera in the cantonments "to see what would happen," and another when a savage stallion in harness was presented with a very hot leg of roast mutton, as he snapped. Theoretically this is a cure for biting, but it only made him more of a cannibal.

I got to meet the soldiery of those days in visits to Fort Lahore and, in a less degree, at Mian Mir Cantonments. My first and best beloved Battalion was the 2nd Fifth Fusiliers, with whom I dined in awed silence a few weeks after I came out. When they left I took up with their successors, the 30th East Lancashire, another North-country regiment; and, last, with the 31st East Surrey—a London recruited confederacy of skilful dog-stealers, some of them my good and loyal friends. There were ghostly dinners too with Subalterns in charge of the Infantry Detachment at Fort Lahore, where, all among marble-inlaid, empty apartments of dead Queens, or under the domes of old tombs, meals began with the regulation thirty grains of quinine in the sherry, and ended—as Allah pleased!

I am, by the way, one of the few civilians who have turned out a Quarter-Guard of Her Majesty's troops. It was on a chill winter morn, about 2 A.M. at the Fort, and though I suppose I had been given the countersign on my departure from the Mess, I forgot it ere I reached the Main Guard, and when challenged announced myself spaciouly as "Visiting Rounds." When the men had clattered out I asked the Sergeant if he had ever seen a finer collection of scoundrels. That cost me beer by the gallon, but it was worth it.

Having no position to consider, and my trade enforcing it, I could move at will in the fourth dimension. I came to realise the bare horrors of the private's life, and the unnecessary torments he endured on account of the

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Christian doctrine which lays down that "the wages of sin is death."

Heaven knows the men died fast enough from typhoid, which seemed to have something to do with water, but we were not sure ; or from cholera, which was manifestly a breath of the Devil that could kill all on one side of a barrack-room and spare the others ; from seasonal fever ; or from what was described as "blood-poisoning."

Lord Roberts, at that time Commander-in-Chief in India, who knew my people, was interested in the men, and—I had by then written one or two stories about soldiers—the proudest moment of my young life was when I rode up Simla Mall beside him on his usual explosive red Arab, while he asked me what the men thought about their accommodation, entertainment-rooms and the like. I told him, and he thanked me as gravely as though I had been a full Colonel.

RUDYARD KIPLING, *Something of Myself* (1937)

## A WALKING TOUR

"WELL, why don't you ?" said she.

I had just remarked that the way I should really like to take a holiday would be by going through the South and West of England on a horse. I had, I said, when young, done a very great deal of walking in those parts. I had regularly walked home from Cambridge to Devonshire, and, later on, I had done several long walks with nothing in my pocket except what I had picked up by cutting people's grass or holding horses' heads. Then, after the war, for year after year, I had escaped the urban pressure in a car and investigated inns and churches and just rung up anybody I knew within driving distance for a bed for one night. But cars, I said, go too fast, and have to be driven, and tempt one to go too far. And, on foot,

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I said, one sometimes gets impatient with dull country, and annoyed because one cannot see over the hedges. "A horse," I said, "would be the ideal thing; a horse at a walking pace with just an occasional trot."

"Well, why don't you?" said she.

"All sorts of reasons," I replied. "For one thing I don't suppose that nowadays you could get a horse put up in this country. When I was young every country pub had 'Good Accommodation for Man and Beast' written up on it. The sign might well still stand as half the motorists are beasts, but they don't expect horses now and they'd be staggered if one presented them with one. The modern innkeeper probably doesn't even know what horses eat."

"Nonsense," said she, "they'd always be able to give your horse a shake-down somewhere and you could always get provender from a neighbouring farmer."

"Perhaps you're right," said I. "But the drawback is that I haven't got a horse."

"Can't you buy one?" she exclaimed impatiently.

"That's precisely what I can't do," I said, "because I can't afford it."

"Then," she rejoined with the logic of her sex, "why don't you take a holiday on foot, write a book about it, and buy a horse with the proceeds?"

"And then," I continued, "take a holiday on the horse, write a book about it and buy a Rolls-Royce with the proceeds. And then take a holiday in the Rolls, write a book and buy a steam-yacht (which I've always wanted) with the proceeds and then . . ."

I was interrupted.

"Don't dodge," said she. "It would do you all the good in the world to go off on foot again. As a matter of fact, I don't believe you could."

That is the way one is made to do things. "Can't I?" thought I. But what I said was: "I daresay a

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little solitude would do me good, and I shall start off on Monday." That is precisely what I did.

But first I had to decide where to go. And then I thought: "Why not walk home to Devon as you used to do?" And then, my mind wavering over that varied country, which seemed in youth so illimitable, thinking of Dartmoor, Exmoor, the Tavy valley, Bideford Bridge, the grey moorland churches, the rich fabrics of Ottery and Cullompton, I thought suddenly of my old school, Blundells, within four miles of that last. It would be empty and I would go there for an hour or two, wander about and recover the past.

As I walked out of London, knapsack on back, and the temperature over eighty degrees, I recovered something of my youth. I had last walked up Putney Hill in 1907. It was just before lunch-time; a toothbrush was my only luggage; I left London with one and threepence in my pocket; I ate bread and oranges; I mistook the way from Guildford in the dark and went to Alton by way of Godalming, instead of over the Hog's Back; and I then went to Salisbury through Romsey instead of through Stockbridge. It made the journey not much less than a hundred miles, and I was in Salisbury twenty-eight hours after I started, having snatched half-hours of sleep under gorse-bushes and in woods. But as for Putney, going up that hill, and having passed the very unimposing portals of "The Pines," I was thinking of Algernon Charles Swinburne.

It was a legend amongst my generation that Theodore Watts-Dunton kept him strictly under control (having rescued him from the brandy-bottle) but allowed him to take a morning walk to an inn on Putney Common where the landlord had strict injunctions to allow him one bottle of beer and no more. Contemporaries of mine at Cambridge had timorously ventured into the inn and observed the poet, whom no one dared, and no decent person wished, to accost, and returned to the University

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to report that the legend was true. As I went up the hill my brain was singing with

“ When the hounds of spring are on winter’s traces ”  
and

“ With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain,”

and I was wondering whether I should have the hardihood to go into the *Green Man* and peer sideways at the little old man who in his flamboyant youth had written those lines. It wasn’t necessary. For in the middle of Putney Hill I met him, coming back from his modest morning potation.

He was almost a dwarf, almost a gnome, very short, with a huge bald forehead, a shapeless black hat perched thereon, a smooth face, an attenuated grey-red beard, long neck, champagne-bottle shoulders and tiny feet, and an old rusty overcoat. Just as I approached him he stopped to give pennies and a pat on the back to two little urchins who were playing with a hoop. This was the roaring Republican who had made England shiver with his denunciations of throne, hearth and altar. I had an impulse to stop and speak, and then a better impulse not to stop and speak ; after I had passed the benevolent little thing I couldn’t help turning round. He was still there, still talking to the children. He was probably late for lunch, in which event I feel sure that Watts-Dunton sternly reproved him.

Yes, but that was nearly thirty years ago. George Meredith also was alive then, and him also I had seen, sitting on Edward Clodd’s balcony at Aldeburgh, a rug over his knees and a pile of yellow French novels on the table at his side. There hadn’t been a war then. It was only two terms since I had first met Rupert Brooke, “ young Apollo golden-haired ” in a Cambridge street—he was a freshman and his serenity and beauty made, even at the first casual encounter, such an impression on



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me as I never received from any other man. King Edward was on the throne, Campbell-Bannerman was Prime Minister, Asquith was a coming man, we had a Two-Power Standard on the seas, and, for me, I was taking a brief and inexpensive holiday from a Plymouth daily paper, now extinct, which was staffed by very good fellows who were supposed, in some mysterious way, to be training me for a writing career. Long, long ago. But Putney has not changed, and as I passed "The Pines" everything came back and I half expected to see Swinburne rambling down the hill again. But, stop : weren't there horse-buses then, and wasn't there a white one that went to Putney now gathered to its fathers with the *Monster*, the *Angel*, and all the rest of them? I suppose so ; but they seemed so ordinary then that one didn't notice them.

So, remembering rather regretfully that I had not accepted an invitation to "The Pines" from Watts-Dunton in 1913, I got to the Heath and turned right along what, in that earlier year, had been a pleasant quiet road, shaded by birch and ash, with glimpses of ponds through the trees, and an occasional dray, carriage or trap driving along it, but is now the Portsmouth Road, with its swarming Kingston By-Pass, no place at all for a foot-passenger. Being of an equable temper, I did not fret because of the stream of eager drivers rushing towards me, or the perpetual hooting behind me of people exasperated at the continued existence of mere legs and feet : I merely thought : "I shall get out of this soon ; anyhow, one doesn't get covered with dust as one used." So on I trudged ; my forehead was streaming with sweat but I was glad that I was disappearing for a time, that neither letters nor telephone messages would reach me, that I could start when I liked and stop when I liked, that time, rain and shine meant nothing to me, that I could converse or be silent with whomsoever I met, and that no one could interfere,

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or would even know, whether I slept under a hedge or (again, freely, under a real or a false name—which last I didn't !) in a hotel. I had recovered, thought I, my youth.

But not altogether, thought I, a little later. After I had passed Coombe and the Equitation School which heralds the Kingston By-Pass, I saw a policeman, and the sight reminded me of the difficulties of recovering the past completely. A series of pictures passed through my mind evoked by memories drawn from walks a generation ago.

For instance : When I was at Cambridge I made a habit of walking home to Devonshire, usually through Oxford, where I picked up Francis Burrows, of Lincoln, who had been at school with me—the Oxford term ending a little later than ours. The beginning of the journey was always the same—Madingly Hill, with about the only view of Cambridge which shows town and towers in the Oxford manner, St. Neot's with its bridge, Bedford with its countless swarms of boys and girls bicycling home from school to the colonels' wives who bore them, Wolverton, Stony Stratford, Newport Pagnell, Buckingham and Bicester. It was a pleasant route, though unexciting. One passed over a bridge, which went over a railway bridge, which went over a canal ; one passed, also, a signpost pointing to Olney, whose spire could be seen in the distance, but I never followed the road to it. Except for the few small towns little can have changed since Cowper (who, even in his age, had to lament some change) wrote :—

“ The poplars are felled, farewell to the shade,  
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade.”

There was no traffic, the country was undulating and modestly wooded, and passers-by were few. Here and there one would encounter an old pedlar squatting under the hedge rearranging the cheap jewellery and reels of

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cotton, ribbons and scissors which the innocent cottagers' wives of that day welcomed as Zulus welcome glass beads. Here and there one might stop for a pipe and a talk with a vagrant, usually a moustached veteran of the South African and Frontier Wars, confessedly restless. And, in the heat of the day, there was always an inn at a road's angle, elm-shaded and with wooden benches in front, where a waggoner's horses slumbrously drooped their heads while their driver quenched his thirst.

George Morland would not have been uncomfortable there and then. He certainly would not like it now on any road approaching the "major" category—cars, motor-bicycles, motor-vans, advertisements and, above all, a law, which Morland would never have understood, enjoining men to take their beer at certain hours of the day and not at certain others. Bread and cheese and beer at five past two is no longer in the country obtainable or legal; and we have to console ourselves by reflecting that at least we do not have dictators who take away our liberties.

I have not travelled that road for thirty years; I will not say that I never shall again, for I am not one of those who take a pleasure in losing as many things as they possibly can. I may even find again the beechwood into which I escaped from the sultriness of a summer afternoon, and where I took out a pencil and a little black notebook, which I still have, and began a verse, expecting, in the warm hush, the presence of Pan, fauns and nymphs, and finding only silence, smooth trunks, great curlings of leaves and shadows dappling the undergrowth, which was quite good enough. Once again I may see a distant train leaving astern a level row of white puffs, seemingly motionless behind a thin row of tall poplars. And once again I may find a pair of old stone gates and wonder what lies behind the curving avenue. Whether I do or not, at least the road, in the end, bends into Oxford, and, ultimately to the Oxford of the colleges.

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There did I always stay for a night, playing billiards, which to the Oxford undergraduates of that day was (I believe) in taverns a prohibited game. At Cambridge the game was played everywhere. Saloons were numerous, and one could openly enter for a trophy called the University Cue in order to be beaten by a little Chinaman. And from Oxford, term after term, we sallied forth, resolved always to take a new route to the west, as far as we were able.

Once we started rather late, intending to walk all night and find, in the morning, not bed and breakfast, but breakfast and bed. We climbed out of the town, remembering what snatches of Matthew Arnold we could, and it was midnight and moonlight before we reached Faringdon, now adorned by one of the newest and one of the tallest of Folly Towers, Lord Berners'.

Our clothing—tweed coats and grey flannel trousers—was much what might be expected of walking youths to-day : the *laudator temporis acti* was quite wrong who, the other day, grumbled in the press that thirty years ago undergraduates all wore smart lounge suits like the gentlemen they then were but, alas, no longer are. But we had on our heads soft felt slouch hats of a somewhat Colonial type ; and that was a day when nobody wore soft hats, and to go out without a hat at all was to invite jeers and following from infants everywhere and lumps of coal from the miners of Radstock. These hats were suspicious in themselves ; so was walking at night ; so was walking in step. We had passed most of the way up the dark street, not a dog barking, not an owl hooting, no other sound expected, and the last bedroom light just being extinguished in the *Star Inn*, when suddenly a shadow loomed out of a doorway and a bull's-eye lantern was flashed in our eyes. "Where are you off to ?" asked a deep and surly voice. "Swindon," we replied. "You come along o' me," said the policeman, "you're deserters."

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Had we not been so astonished at first and then amused, we might have reflected, made a bolt for it, and had some fun in the dark woods with the county constabulary, which an innocent person, in such circumstances, is perfectly entitled to do. But unreadiness, and perhaps a latent (however deeply latent) sense of law and order, and perhaps curiosity as to what would happen, made us accompany the constable like lambs. He took us into a room, catechised us at length, and ultimately let us go on, very charily. We arrived at Swindon footsore, cold and stiff at six and did manage to get beds in a wretched little lodging-house. We were asked if we minded lodgers having just got out of them. We were too tired to mind anything—even the discovery, half a minute later, that our predecessors between the sheets must have been firemen or greasers who slept in their clothes.

That was one experience with the police which, pausing for a rest on the Portsmouth road, I thought would probably not be repeated. I remember another. In the year 1907 I walked from Devonshire to London in ragged clothes and with a horrible beard—breaking the journey for a night or two at Balliol where I temporarily lapsed into such civilisation as the place has to offer. I started with about eighteenpence, occasionally slept in woods, haystacks (it is unpleasant to have a rat biting one's nose when one is asleep) and casual wards, and now and then replenishing my purse with sixpences earned by holding horses' heads or cutting people's grass. One night, about the time of the closing of inns, after a whole day of rain had rained itself out, I crawled into a hamlet somewhere west of Frome. I saw a lighted doorway, obviously that of a public-house, with a bareheaded man standing at the top of the steps against the light and a group of persons below saying good-night to each other and to him: "Goo'night, Bill," "Goo'night, Ern," and all the traditional, ritual rigmarole. "A bed at last," thought

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I, and modestly approached. For I had over two shillings.

"Can you give me a bed for the night?"

"No; full up."

"I don't care what it is, as long as it's some sort of shakedown."

"Full up; better try the next place."

"But anything will do. I've got money, look! Even a lie-down in a barn or shed."

At this point I observed that the departing drinkers, mostly hobbledehoyes of twenty in the so-called "jolly" stage, were clustering all round me and nudging me; and then, before I could say more, either by way of menace or appeal *ad misericordiam*, a policeman, greeted on all hands with "'Ere, look at 'im, Sam," barged through the muster and towered over me, asking what this was. All were silent; "*Conticuerunt omnes*," as Virgil remarks at the beginning of the second book of his *Aeneid*—which, for some reason, at school, I was made to learn before the fourth and sixth books, never coming to the first book at all until, in later life, I thought I might as well learn a little Latin. "I was asking the landlord for a bed for the night," I explained. The policeman, a big hog-faced man, shot his face forward at mine, and glared in a manner meant to be terrifying to me and comic to his friends. "We've seen your sort here before," he said; and looked around to the rustics for applause, and got it in a sort of blend of cheer and hoot. "But," I protested, remembering some sort of second-hand, word-of-mouth information, "there is a law that every landlord is bound to give anybody who comes some sort of bed, and food too, if he can pay for it." "'Ark at 'im," observed the august embodiment of the law; and, in the wan lamplight in the middle of that world of dark dampness, the flushed faces of his comrades assumed an uglier look while, with a suspicion of bared teeth, they let forth gusts of wolfish laughter. The

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policeman, born leader of men, now assumed the air of a dictator implacably condemning a helpless suppliant.

"You better move on," he said. "You ain't goin' to sleep nowhere in this parish. They'll look after the likes o' you along the road."

I prepared, though soaked and fatigued, to plod again my far from homeward way. Just as, with difficulty, I had elbowed my way out of the little crowd, the constable's coarse voice was again uplifted behind me. "Boys," he shouted, "wot price that for a German spy!" This, as the Americans were later to put it, was "a new one on me," but even with Thermopylae in mind, I could think of no practical way out except trudging on, pretending to take no notice. Trudge on I did. They followed me some distance along the muddy road, hooting and cat-calling; I went on, not turning my head, and the clamour gradually died away as they faded off to their homes and warmth. A mile or so out, the sky having cleared of clouds and an arch of cold stars come out, I rested under a hedge, a dripping elm above me, lit a pipe and endeavoured to become indignant. I failed. Nothing with the element of the comic in it could ever make me indignant, nor anything in life, I think, except cold-blooded cruelty to the helpless. Also I remembered some other policemen I had met that selfsame day. One, in the morning, a large kind man, who had looked compassionately at my ragged waterproof, passed the time of day and asked me what I was. I pitched, in the usual way, the usual yarn about being a "clurk," pronounced to rhyme with the work of which I was in search, and I had had to take his offered sixpence, because it would have been beastly (and discouraging to him) to admit that I was a hoax. And then, somewhere on the Taunton-Langport road, just about noon, I had been trudging along in such rain as I had never encountered before. Pillars and flung splashes of it came down; my hat dripped, my hair was soaked, my

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eyebrows poured water on to my spectacles, rain ran in runnels down my neck, front and back, my chest was wet, my mackintosh was heavy with flood, my boots were full of water, and the road at which I patiently stared was a muddy lake with clayey islands in it. I splashed along, empty of all thought, when suddenly I heard trotting behind me and a trap suddenly stopped at my side. Two men in shiny waterproofs were in it, and the driver offered me a lift, which I jumped at. They then resumed their conversation as though I (very down-at-heels, be it remembered) did not exist, and very peculiar and touching it was. For they were plain-clothes men in pursuit of an absconding thief and they did not want to catch him, because they knew him and were sorry for him.

He had been embezzling his employer's money, and had just disappeared with a last lump of it. He was, I learnt by overhearing from the back, a decent quiet citizen, and his temptation had been great, as he had an extravagant wife about whom the policemen used blunt words. Their instructions were to "comb" all the inns of the district, as it was believed that the fugitive would wish to drown his sorrows in drink. Their technique was simple and effective. They rolled up to the front door of an inn with a great clatter and loud talk and took so long descending and entering that there was plenty of time for their quarry to get out of the back door. Somebody would arrest him sometime, but they didn't want it to be themselves; they had played snooker with the poor fellow. Ultimately we stopped at a rather imposing tavern. The two men got down, so did I, and I was just going to leave them with humble and hearty thanks, when the senior one, remarking that I was wet and probably hungry and could do with a bit of lunch, suggested that I should hold their horse's head while they were eating and then go in and have whatever I liked, which would be charged to them. Pelting as it was, and whetted though my appetite was by a rumour of roast



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beef, I declined the hospitality as I knew I was a fraud, held the horse's head for about half an hour in the rain and felt myself entitled to the sixpence (which got me bread and cheese) which they ultimately gave me. . . .

And—for it took much less time to remember (although I was frequently distracted by the pace of the cars or the oddity of their occupants) than it does now to write—as I lit a second cigarette before resuming my pack and my journey I thought of one more encounter with the Force which was likelier to happen to a young man than to a sedate citizen of my present age.

In the Summer Term of 1905 a man I knew in Sidney Sussex became (a) enamoured of a young woman ; (b) determined to see as much of her as possible ; and (c) bitten by the theatre. He therefore conceived the notion of forming a theatrical company which should tour East Anglia during the Long Vacation, the high motive being provided by his determination to give all his profits to the East Anglian hospitals. The girl, who later became his wife, arranged to come under the protection of an aunt ; a number of undergraduates produced a sufficiency of sisters and friends, a professional leading lady was brought along by a Clare man who could talk about a lot of actors and actresses by their Christian names, halls were booked in three shires, and a week after term ended we assembled at Bury St. Edmunds for rehearsals.

The excursion lasted several weeks. The plays we did were chosen because they were out of copyright. *East Lynne* was discussed, and, much to my regret, turned down ; but we had *The School for Scandal*, a comedy of the eighteenth century by Planché, full of marquises and minuets, called *The Follies of the Night*, Robertson's *Still Waters Run Deep*, and for pastoral purposes (for we knew several archdeacons with nice gardens) a work in very dull blank verse called *King René's Daughter*. Little of these last three can I now recall. In *Still Waters* the villainous captain who tried to make the tempted wife

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elope with him lured her with the prospects of "the orange groves of Seville"; and the lady, when saved, said to her strong, stern husband: "Tell me of my faults, John, and I will try to correct them." In *King René's Daughter* I was allotted the part of a venerable Arab physician named Ibn Yahya, who droned interminable sage speeches through a long white beard in front of the archidiaconal rhododendrons and laurels, while rows of garden-party ladies sat on chairs and waited patiently for their tea. We made no profits for the hospitals. Here and there, as at Felixstowe, where there must have been a shortage of pierrots that year, we played to packed, and easily pleased, audiences, but in some of the town halls of the Suffolk backwood we used anxiously to peep through the curtains in the hope that enough people would arrive to pay for the rent of the hall; while once, at Bury I think, we acted in a vast old semi-derelict theatre to a few dimly descried and scattered pilgrims who might have been left over, with the decorations and the cobwebs, from the last visit of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Crummles. We learned what it was to stand about on junction platforms on Sunday, and also what theatrical lodgings were like. These last had to be booked in advance, and our advance agent used to go ahead of us to make these and other arrangements and get bills out, usually rejoining us at night. His name I need not mention here: he is now an imposing country clergyman; and he had concocted for himself the remarkable alias of Eli Maggott, which appeared on the programmes, and must have astonished the landladies when he left his cards on them.

There came a day when he thought he would like a rest, and I was asked to deputise for him; I was to go to Felixstowe, do our business and then return to, I think, Mildenhall. When I had finished at Felixstowe I thought to myself that I would like a walk, so I decided to walk through the night and get to Mildenhall at least

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for lunch next day. I was not ideally equipped for all weathers ; I had no hat, no kind of overcoat or mackintosh, and instead of the customary stout brogues, my feet were adorned by a pair of dancing pumps of the old bow-ribboned type. However, it didn't look like rain, and after some beer and sandwiches off I started.

About twelve midnight, the sky being dark, a cool breeze blowing, and the streets deserted, I reached without adventure the middle of Ipswich when, under a street lamp, I was brought to a stop by a policeman.

"Where are you going ? "

"Mildenhall."

"What are you going to do there ? "

"I'm in a theatrical company which is acting there, and I'm walking all night."

"You have no visible means of support."

My pocket was full of silver. I pulled out a handful of it and showed it to him. "I'm afraid you're wrong there," I said politely. He was a resourceful man, and I admit that his next remark aroused my admiration.

"Where did you get that money from ? " he asked, in a suspicious growl. My explanation that it was my own appeared to satisfy him ; he let me go and I marched on and out of the town.

I had walked, I suppose, for half an hour and was on a dusty road between hedges, thinking about anything in the world except policemen, when I heard a bicycle bell behind me. I turned round and before I knew where I was I was lit by three lamps on three bicycles beside which three policemen were standing, one of them being my original interrogator. It was evident that he had shrunk from tackling so dangerous a customer as myself alone, and gone back to the station with his alarming report to secure reinforcements. "You'd better come back with us," said the senior member, a man with a heavy Kitchener moustache. I expostulated, protested, spoke of charges and legal rights, all to no avail ; my

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depression became worse when I was made to mount the step of one of the bicycles and take hold of a policeman's shoulder, for the sharp step almost cut my foot in half through my thin sole and it was with great difficulty that I kept myself from groaning. However, we got to the station and went into the comparative glare of the office. Nobody of importance seemed to be in charge. My name and alleged occupation and habitat (there were sneering smiles and references to "a pretty sort of stoddent" when I mentioned my college) were taken down ; and I was then informed that I should be looked after in the morning. An officer took a key and walked down a little passage to open a cell, while another pointed at a pile of mattresses standing endways up against a wall and told me one of them was mine. I stood and stared in my inexperience, when he exclaimed : " Well, do you think I'm going to carry it in for you ? " I took the hint, shouldered the heavy thing, carried it to the cell, laid it on the bed and was then locked in. " Oh, well," I thought, as I curled myself up on it, " it's quite warm and this is as amusing a way of spending a night as any, but I must say I'm glad I'm not a poor homeless man whom nobody knows." I had shut my eyes and had almost forgotten where I was when I heard a loud and continuous crackling in the straw of the mattress underneath me. I sat up sharply. " Mice ? " I wondered, and then the revolting truth dawned on me. I had never seen or heard bed-bugs before ; but these could be nothing else and there must be scores of them. Feeling slightly sick I got up, beat on the door and called out. Probably they were used to such noises there ; at all events nobody took the slightest notice ; and there was only one thing for it—I must stand in the corner until morning brought release.

I did ; I daresay for five hours ; until a turnkey came (the huge insects were by then visible on the floor) and led me along to the little office where a benevolent-looking

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chieftain was now sitting with a large book open in front of him. I did not take long to convince this sensible being that a mistake had been made. He became almost effusively kind and ordered me a mug of hot cocoa and some slabs of bread and butter which I consumed in his presence. I shook hands, went out, and sat by the parapet of a bridge, glad of the fresh air.

When I got to Mildenhall, by train, most of my friends merely guffawed ; the single serious one, a person very strong on the liberties of the subject and the insolences of "a little brief authority," was passionately keen that I should kick up the devil of a row about wrongful arrest, sue for damages, and have the Ipswich Police Force turned upside down. I simply couldn't, partly because I was too indolent, partly because I loathed rows, and partly because I was afraid I might get that jackass of a constable the sack.

SIR JOHN SQUIRE,  
*The Honeysuckle and the Bee* (1937)

## A LONDON TAXI DRIVER

Most men get a rush of blood to the head immediately after getting a licence. They walk into a cab-garage and start chucking their weight about. I ought to have known better, but I behaved as badly as any of them. What else can be expected when the boss shakes hands with you as you enter the garage and calls you "Mister"; and when the garage foreman, whom you may have previously known as a tyrant, arches his back and calls you "sir"?

I got my licence and badge in the afternoon and had intended to start the next day. But I'd looked forward to my first day so long I couldn't bear to wait a whole night. So I went from the Public Carriage Office to a garage and asked for a cab.

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The boss, as I said, made a fuss of me. There were several cabs lying idle. I picked the one I fancied. A garage-boy was ordered to start the engine, fill it with petrol and oil, and—the crowning honour—to dust the driving seat before I sat on it.

After the mechanism of the taximeter had been explained to me—starting, stopping, ringing up extras and so on—I drove the cab up the alley-way all a-quiver with excitement, and turned into the street.

The cab-garage was in Fulham. I was free to range wherever I fancied within the Metropolitan area. I decided to make towards Kensington.

No one called me before I got to Redcliffe Gardens, near Earls Court Station, and as there were no cabs on the rank I decided to stop there. I was having beginner's luck in finding the rank empty. I returned to it twice that evening, finding it empty each time. But in ten years' taxi-driving I don't think I've found it empty more than half a dozen times since, except between midnight and eight in the morning.

As I sat on my cab in the middle of the road, with the traffic rushing by on either side, and my head turning in all directions on the look-out for a waving arm, I began to remember how much I didn't know about London. It would be just my luck to be asked for a place I'd never heard of.

And five minutes later a man came over and asked for it. And in Chelsea at that.

He was rather shocked to think I didn't know where he lived. But he was quite nice about it. Everyone had to learn, he said, though he'd always thought taxi drivers had to pass an examination or something. But there! I'd know better next time.

After setting him down, I returned to the rank and waited comfortably for the next job. I'd been told by another driver that if I got too many reports for not knowing my way about, I'd have to go through the

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examination again. But the next one was a woman who wanted South Kensington Station—only a shilling's-worth, but a relieving shilling's-worth.

After setting her down I put on the rank there and was called to a near-by hotel. Two women and a load of luggage to Waterloo. When I set them down I wondered where to go next. There was a cab setting down in front of me, and I decided to follow him.

He went out of the station, turned left into York Road, went along towards Westminster Bridge for about a quarter of a mile, then suddenly turned left again into a gateway. I thought I might as well keep following. The gateway led into a dark tunnel. Then we turned right into another tunnel—dark and silent and deserted except for us. Suddenly we began to climb a steep slope. I changed down to third, then to second ; then, as we turned sharp left up a still steeper slope, into first. There was daylight above. The next moment I was in the middle of Waterloo arrival platform, with a newly arrived train on either side of me, and two porters racing to claim me first. Beginner's luck again. In the normal course that tunnel is full of waiting cabs and the journey takes an hour or more. The winning porter jumped on the side and ordered me to pull over to a group of people. Four passengers I got, and another load of luggage—back to the hotel I had just come from.

So it went on all that evening. Almost as soon as I finished one job I found another. I went home at midnight. I'd worked for seven hours and earned fourteen shillings, including tips. It was an even better job than I'd hoped. I didn't realise how much was due to beginner's luck until later, when I tried to relate working hours to income and work out a minimum time for earning and a maximum for writing.

Most of the cab companies like to have two drivers on each cab, one driving it by day and one by night. But as there are, roughly, twelve thousand drivers to eight

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thousand cabs, complete "doubling," as we call it, isn't possible. Nor is it desirable. There isn't enough night work to justify it. But that doesn't prevent a company from wanting to have its own fleet doubled. Most men prefer day work ; at least, their wives do. The result is, night drivers are usually pampered like prima donnas. This suited me, and I was all for night work. But first I thought I'd get a little all-round experience. I left my first job after a fortnight—I didn't like the cab-bodies there ; the driving seats seemed to have been made specially to fit small boys—and went to another garage where they could give me a comfortable seat and a cab all to myself.

This company ran about a hundred cabs, all Unics. Most of them were "snatched" cabs—cabs that had been taken back from owner-drivers who'd failed to keep up the instalments. The operating company was a subsidiary of the selling company, so that the initial cost of each cab was probably much lower than the one paid by the ordinary operator. Consequently, they were more free and easy than the average company with long-day cabs. At least, that was how we drivers accounted for it.

Cabmen are paid on a commission basis—a third of the meter takings as a rule. There was competition among drivers for long-day cabs, and most garages who ran them kept a watchful eye on the daily amounts paid in by each driver. As soon as his money dropped below a certain level—either through a run of bad luck or from some other cause—he lost his regular cab.

But this particular company never seemed to worry so long as a man worked fairly regularly. The cashier was equally polite whether a man paid in a pound or five shillings for his day's work. The garage foreman would spend hours tuning up an engine to a driver's satisfaction. And the manager seemed solely concerned with seeing that his staff did all they could to make drivers comfortable.



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It was a happy job, and I don't think they lost any money by it.

I started work about midday and worked till midnight. The garage was in Wandsworth Bridge Road. I usually made towards Kensington for a start. If I was fairly lucky I'd get a fare—a "job" we call it—up to the West End before one. If I was luckier still I'd get a job to the city before one. If I set down anywhere near the Bank at lunch-time, I was unlucky if I didn't find a job back to the West End for lunch.

Between one and two I might find several short jobs like that—if I was lucky. Everything depended on luck. It was possible to spend four or five hours in the heart of the West End and not find a single job. At two I'd usually put my cab on the Piccadilly Hotel rank, in the centre of Piccadilly, and wait for the people to come out after lunch. I might get a business man back to the City, a woman going shopping, or—if I was particularly lucky—someone who would hire me for a drive round, lasting the whole afternoon.

But that was "meeting Old Bill"—and one couldn't hope to meet Old Bill more than once a week, even in 1928. Nowadays a cabman thinks himself lucky if he meets him once in a twelvemonth.

At about three I usually stopped for a light meal at the nearest café or shelter. Then back to work again, cruising mainly now—"mooching" as we call it—or putting on the short ranks around the shopping districts: Piccadilly, Bond Street, Oxford Street and Wigmore Street. This till six, when I'd probably get someone going home from the West End or City to Kensington, Hampstead or another of the well-to-do residential districts.

The best thing to do then was to work the local tube-station—South Kensington, say, or Swiss Cottage—getting shilling rides to the roads round about.

Although we were permitted to work all suburban

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ranks with a full Metropolitan licence, it wasn't always advisable for a town driver to work in the outer suburbs like Golders Green or Highgate. Elderly gentlemen would dash out of the station straight into the cab, and say, "Home." And if you asked them where "Home" was they'd stare at you speechlessly for a second or two and then cry, "But everybody knows ME!"

They were so thoroughly and convincingly shocked that the effect on me was always one of shame. I automatically apologised for my ignorance. After listening to the apology with an irritated grunt, they'd grudgingly give me the address; as it were: "The Nook, of course." And when I had to admit I didn't know "The Nook" or "The Elms," or whatever it was, they'd get really angry. What! Didn't know "The Nook"? Was I mad? They'd never heard such nonsense. How dared I presume to ply for hire outside their station?

It simply wasn't worth a shilling.

The temptation of the suburban rank for the town driver is the hope of a job back to the West End. But that was seldom my luck, and after several of these unhappy shilling's-worths I mooched back towards less parochial neighbourhoods, hoping to pick up a job on the way.

Between seven and half-past, if I was working Kensington or Hampstead, there were diners going up to the West End restaurants. But the West End was slack at this time. People didn't begin to move again until the theatre rush began, at a quarter-past eight. It was more profitable, besides being pleasanter, to mooch through Belgravia towards Kensington and find someone going to a theatre from there. One could do a three-shilling job in these comparatively traffic-free neighbourhoods as quickly as a shilling job in the congested West End.

The trouble with West End ranks is that they are in the middle of the road, and when traffic is thick it's difficult to get across to would-be passengers. It's more

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profitable as a rule to keep crawling along by the kerb inside the "magic circle"—the area within a quarter of a mile radius of Piccadilly Circus. But there's no glossing over the fact that this crawling by the kerb, especially when one has to keep pulling out round parked cars, is a nuisance to everyone else, including those of one's fellow-cabmen who are carrying passengers. I wasn't sufficiently thick-skinned to be able to do much of it.

When the theatre work was over, about a quarter to nine, I'd sometimes make for a main-line station. There was a boat train at Victoria about this time, and one or two likely trains at Euston.

At about half-past nine or ten I usually stopped at a cab-shelter for the big meal of the day.

Cab-shelters are a little more expensive than coffee-stalls or Italian cafés, but the food is better and it's always freshly cooked. The only drawback to a shelter is its smallness. A dozen fair-sized men sitting down to the same number of fair-sized meals just about fill it. About a quarter of the space is boarded off as a kitchen. There's room in it for a stove and a cook, and that's about all. The seating is arranged so that the customers sit on a fixed bench with their backs to the wall, and their knees under a table running round three sides like a counter, and leaving a rectangular space in the centre for serving. In this table are flaps that lift up to allow the customers to get to the bench behind.

The customers, of course, are mostly cabmen. Policemen are sometimes admitted if they are known to be well behaved. And so are cabmen's friends. But the visitor who looks in to watch the lower classes eat finds us a little too much for him as a rule.

While I was eating, the attendant—or the "looker-out" as we call him—would be pushing my cab up on the rank outside, and when I was third to go would give me a call. If I wasn't ready to come out, someone

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behind, who was, would "pull round" me and I'd "lose way." But that was in 1928. Nowadays, with jobs so scarce, I'll be more likely to gulp down the last of my food and rush out. If I lose way it may mean an hour longer to wait.

"Lookers-out" are usually old cabmen who've lost their licences and are ekeing out their last years on the coppers they get from us for pushing up the cabs, answering the telephone and looking out for jobs. Some are more useful than others. At Swiss Cottage rank the looker-out was blind; but he was a fine old chap. It was worth a penny to speak to him. And he was splendid on the telephone.

If the looker-out hadn't called me by the time I'd finished my meal, I'd come out and take a look at my position. If it was too far back to be promising, I'd probably pull away and make towards a theatre rank.

Piccadilly Circus by this time would be a mass of coloured lights. Outside each theatre was a row of chauffeur-driven cars, while the back streets of Soho, including all the short cuts, were so chock-a-block with the abandoned cars of owner drivers that it was three chances to one on getting hopelessly blocked if one attempted to drive through them. Bus drivers were speeding up whenever they got the chance in an attempt to get through the "magic circle" before the theatres broke—or as we say, "the gaffs burst"—and empty cabs were converging on Piccadilly Circus from every direction.

At zero hour—about ten minutes to eleven—policemen on special duty suddenly appeared at the Piccadilly end of Coventry Street and Shaftesbury Avenue and various corners in the vicinity, to sort out empty cabs from the other traffic and turn them away from the theatres and the Circus.

There are arguments for and against this practice. But it was exasperating to see a line of double-decker

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buses and large limousines, and even six-wheel lorries, permitted free access to "gaff street," and find myself with my small mobile vehicle turned off into some back alley, hopelessly blocked with parked cars, just as I was in sight of a job.

But the cabman knows every tiny back turning that will bring him in sight of his objective, and a good many policemen are needed to guard them all. Besides, even if there's a policeman watching every one there's always a <sup>man</sup> chance of slipping through while the policeman's <sup>and</sup> arguing with the cabman in front. The young policeman is often caught like that. While he's busy reading the riot act to one driver, twenty or more cabs will have pulled round and slipped by before he's realised it. Good cabmen are as swift and tricky as fleas.

Once past the policeman and inside the magic circle, the art was to get myself so thoroughly jammed into the traffic block that all Scotland Yard couldn't get me out again—at least, not until I was ready to depart with a passenger inside.

Once the flag comes down the policeman loses the game. Your cab is hired and you are at liberty to go where you will. On the whole, both sides play fair, and it's simply a battle of wits. Sometimes the policeman turns nasty, prevents the passenger from getting into the cab, and reports the cabman for a summons. But there's always a risk in this type of case that the passenger will be so annoyed he'll attend the police-court as a witness for the driver. (If he does, the policeman may lose; for whatever may be said against the average magistrate, one can seldom accuse him of lacking in respect for the gentry.) So where there's a passenger, especially one in evening dress, even the most angry policeman seldom risks a summons.

There are, as I said, arguments for and against this attempt to turn us away from the theatres. The police argue that ranking accommodation is provided and it's

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our business to use it. We argue that these ranks are not always sufficient to meet the eleven o'clock demand—that even if they were, many of them are in the middle of the road and therefore cut off from intending passengers by the press of theatre traffic—and finally, that what is good enough for empty private cars and empty buses is good enough for empty cabs. In practice, most of us use the ranks where they are usable, and mooch only where they are not. I do, anyhow ; mooching at theatre time is too wearing on the nerves to be done unnecessarily.

These excitements continue from just before eleven o'clock until about a quarter to twelve. If I was lucky I'd come out of the maelstrom with a passenger inside. If it was only a shilling to a near-by hotel I might go back and try my luck again. But one fight per night was usually enough for me. It was easier to put my cab on the hotel rank, probably empty at this time, and take the chance of getting someone to a station for a night train.

By that time I'd usually had enough for one day, and turned towards the garage. If no one called me on the way—they nearly always wanted to go in the opposite direction when they did—I'd turn the cab over to the washer and probably be hearing the clocks strike midnight as I walked home.

I did hardly any writing for the first few months. Later, when the urge became insistent, I worked night-shifts, so as to be free in the afternoons. I then took over from the day driver at six in the evening and worked until three in the morning. From six until twelve, of course, I carried on as before ; but for the rest of the time I had to learn new methods.

After midnight, if I came back to the West End I could make certain of at least one more job by putting on a restaurant or a night-club rank. I could rank for Princes and the Piccadilly Hotel at the end of a line of cabs in the middle of Piccadilly, stretching from Swallow

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Street to Bond Street, or I could rank for the Mayfair and look through the railings of Berkeley Square at the huge old oak trees and the trim lawn, so bright a green under the lamps that they looked too good to be true. I could rank against the railings in Park Lane for Grosvenor House and—later—the Dorchester. Then there was Bond Street for the Embassy, Shaftesbury Avenue for the Trocadero, Regent Street for the Hungaria, and Leicester Square for Ciro's. All these places and more I could come back to. But, from the bread-and-butter point of view, they were rather like the railway station ranks: there was the certainty of a long wait, perhaps until two or three in the morning, and no certainty of getting a job big enough to pay for the waiting.

As a rule I preferred the more exciting gamble in the suburbs. If it was a fine night I might go mooching for miles along the lamplit deserted streets, keeping an eye open for people who'd missed the last buses and trains. I might be lucky and find jobs wherever I went, or I might find nothing at all. But, win or lose, I was happier wandering about than waiting on the ranks. And the streets are friendly after midnight.

After two o'clock there was little hope of a job anywhere, unless I was in a good position on a night-club rank, or was willing to stay out for the early trains or the market people. And I wasn't willing to do that. I wanted to get some writing done during the day. So, if I was empty at half-past two I'd turn my cab towards home, and if no one called me usually reach the garage about three.

When I started cabbage I expected to have a rough time of it for a month or two—like a new boy at school. But the seasoned cabmen were extraordinarily kind to us "butter-boys," as they called us.

The first thing a butter-boy discovers is the amazing number of things he failed to learn at the Public Carriage

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Office. He already knows how much he doesn't know about the passenger's London, but until he starts to drive he hasn't the faintest idea of how much he doesn't know about the cabman's.

The best thing he can do is to confess himself a butter-boy as soon as he puts on a rank. But he's too diffident to do that as a rule. He pretends to be a seasoned cabman who doesn't often use that particular rank, and proceeds to give himself away every time he opens his mouth. He speaks of fares instead of "jobs"; of luggage instead of "peters"; of a man and a woman instead of a "Cock and a hen"; of theatres instead of "gaffs"; says "a fare hailed me" instead of "I trapped a job." And so on. Meanwhile the other cabmen gather round and encourage him. If they play him carefully they'll have him putting his hand in his pocket before he's been there ten minutes, and showing them what a lot of money he earns. By the time he's become first man he'll have given them all advice on the most profitable ranks and the best times to use them. Some of the older men will even have made notes so as not to forget. And when the job at last arrives, and he drives off with it, he'll go away happy in the thought that no one has found him out.

I don't know how many times I was "taken on" in this and other ways. I don't think about it more than I can help. The courage to admit ignorance is one of the several sorts of courage I lack. Or I did then. I kid myself I've grown out of it now. It's much easier to admit ignorance as one grows older—especially ignorances that are past.

If a man admits himself a "butter-boy" and asks for advice, he'll be told everything he wants to know—and ungrudgingly. But few butter-boys have the pluck to ask. The ordering of the ranks is the most difficult thing for the new man to learn. So many of them are divided into different sections, one feeding the other; so that



what looks like a series of separate ranks is often one whole. It's difficult for a man to realise that if he wants to rank for the Trocadero, for instance, he has to put his cab on the short rank at the junction of Dean Street and feed down through six separate ranks until he finally reaches the rank for one cab opposite the door. All these ranks vary in size, and he's liable to be summoned for "putting on foul" if he feeds down too quickly, and summoned for failing to move up his cab if he's too slow.

It would be tedious to go into all the things a cabman is liable to be summoned for. The regulations concerning what cabmen may not do have been piling up since the reign of William IV—perhaps because the people who make the laws so often ride in cabs. Broadly speaking, a cabman commits an offence as soon as he comes out of the garage, and goes on committing offences until he puts his cab away again. His whole official existence is one long misdemeanour. And after he has been duly summoned and fined—the amount seeming to vary according to whether he pleads guilty or not guilty—he may have to come before the police licensing committee and be tried all over again. For if the magistrate sometimes lets him off, it doesn't follow that the police will. They may exercise their right to suspend his licence.

The above description, of course, is biased. But there's quite a lot of truth in it. There may, too, be some truth in what follows. I once asked a policeman why he and his fellows spent so much of their time on small game like us. It was a standing joke with us cabmen that when the mobile police first started, a police car with two whole policemen in it would sometimes follow a hired car right across London. And all, apparently, with the object of reporting the cabman for a summons if, when he got to the other end, five passengers got out instead of the regulation four. But to return to my policeman. He was an elderly policeman, and having apparently given up all hope of promotion was willing to speak his mind.

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He said there was no official pressure brought on individual policemen to be particularly severe with cabmen. It was due simply to a natural human tendency to take the line of least resistance. When the station sergeant upbraided a group of young policemen who hadn't been bringing in many charges, and asked them if they thought they were paid to "carry the uniform round the streets," they naturally went on duty determined to show results. And results that were certain. A charge dismissed by the magistrate was worse for their record than no charges at all.

Apart from costermongers, who were sometimes rather a handful to drag to the station, the only easy line was motoring offences. But all sorts of people drove themselves nowadays. You never knew whom you might be reporting for a summons when you stepped up to a ramshackle-looking car. The man might be wealthy enough to brief a counsel against you and get you a reprimand from the magistrate. But with a cabman you knew exactly what you were dealing with. Where it was policeman's word against cabman's the magistrate was practically certain to convict. Even if the cabman had a solicitor, the solicitor wouldn't go too strongly against the police in a doubtful case, for fear he put himself in the magistrate's bad books and spoiled his chances with other clients.

So said the elderly policeman. It may have been a tissue of lies—even a farrago of nonsense. But it sounded feasible to me.

But the system works—after a fashion. The laws are on the Statute Book, and twelve thousand men have to be kept in order somehow. The average cabman and the average policeman, realising they're both poor men trying to get a living on the streets, work together as well as each man's need for bread will allow. The only way to alter things would be to draft a new set of laws suited to modern conditions, and then repeal the century's

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accumulation of old ones. But I'm told it would cost at least three hundred pounds to get a private Bill introduced into the House of Commons. How much more it would cost before it became law I don't know. One of these days perhaps the cab-trade organisations will agree long enough to do something about it.

No driver, no journeyman driver at least, complains about the police supervision of his cab. It is his one sure protection against being compelled to take out a dangerous vehicle. There are a few cab proprietors who keep their fleets in first-class condition purely as a matter of business. But I doubt if many would if it wasn't for the strict supervision of the Public Carriage Office. Where profit is the primary consideration there's a natural human tendency to ignore everything else. And so long as the wheels go round, and the meter registers, and a man can be persuaded to drive it, a dangerous cab will probably show as much profit as a safe one, if not more.

There are several different makes of taxi-cabs, but they all have to conform to the Public Carriage Office's "Conditions of Fitness." These conditions cover every constructional detail, from the over-all size of the vehicle to the material used for stuffing the seats. (There's a strict rule against stuffing them with "seaweed or whalebone shavings.")

Every cab has to be inspected and "approved" before it is licensed. But the licence only lasts a twelvemonth. Before a new one is granted the cab must be completely overhauled and submitted for another examination. This is repeated every year of its ten-year life. And since a policeman is always a policeman, whatever job he happens to be doing, the cab is treated like a ticket-of-leave man without an alibi. It's got to be absolutely beyond suspicion before a P.C.O. inspector will approve of it. I can testify to their thoroughness from personal experience.

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I once bought a second-hand cab and applied for a proprietor's licence. Before I was permitted to submit the cab for approval, I had first to obtain the P.C.O.'s approval of myself as a "fit and proper person" to be a cab proprietor. Since they already knew me as a fit and proper cab driver that wasn't very difficult. I filled up the necessary forms, and later received a visit from a police sergeant who wanted to know how much I'd paid for the cab, and one or two other personal details. Then I received a form permitting me to submit the cab itself.

Nowadays, I'm told, the P.C.O. wants to know a man's financial position as well—whether he's got any money in the bank, how much his debts amount to and so on. But the sergeant who visited me wasn't as curious as all that.

I'd had the cab overhauled and re-painted, and had spent several days underneath it myself to make sure everything was in first-class condition; and I drove it into the P.C.O. yard feeling rather proud of it. Two inspectors dressed in overalls and old soft hats walked over to it and surveyed it. For an instant they gazed gloatingly, rather like two hungry small boys who had just been offered an unexpected feast. Then they pulled themselves together, composed their features, and got to work.

I was ordered to drive over the pit. They took a light and went down below. They were down there some time. When they came up they were frowning. One had got some grease on his fingers and the other had found some water in the engine tray—probably from the washer's hose-pipe. I tried to explain these things away, but it was no use. The cab wasn't clean. The under-carriage must be scraped and re-painted.

Then one of them opened the bonnet and began tugging at the plug wires. He persevered at this for some minutes until at last he succeeded in breaking one off.

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"New ignition wires," he said, and his mate made a note of it.

After that they tried the wheels for side-play and the spring for resilience, but got no change out of them. Then one got into the driving-seat, gripped the steering-wheel firmly with both hands, and tried to wrench the steering-pillar loose. He did his best, and he was a strong man, but nothing happened. Apart from finding the brake and clutch pedals too smooth, and the hand-brake and gear levers set too close together, and the floor boards a little too easy to pull out, there wasn't much to be done in the driving-seat. So they both got inside and took it in turns to bounce up and down on the passenger's seat.

First one bounced, and then looked at his mate with raised eyebrows. Then the other bounced, and shook his head. Then they both bounced several times in succession. Finally, both shook their heads. I was relieved. I knew policemen's minds worked by negatives. There was evidently nothing wrong with the back seat. But one of them suddenly leaned forward and rubbed the front window ledge with his finger-tips. Raised eyebrows. The other rubbed. Both nodded. Wood insufficiently polished. Then they went over the hood lining, banging it with the flat of their hands for dust and tugging to see if they could find a loose bit to pull away from the tacks that held it. When they'd finished inside they came out and set about the job in earnest, jumping on the running-boards, tugging at the door-handles, trying to wrench off the spare wheel, and finally stabbing holes in the newly painted woodwork with a bradawl.

It was all so like the Marx Brothers investigating a piano that if it hadn't been my cab I should have laughed and laughed. Especially when they got to work with the bradawl. I daresay the expression on my face was funny, too. But it was a stout old cab, built, as its makers claimed, "like a battleship." It still stood on all

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four wheels when they'd finished. I then re-connected the broken plug wire, replaced the floor boards and mat and took them for a ride.

When we got back they said there was nothing much wrong with it—nothing radically wrong, anyhow. But there were a few minor details like smooth pedals, bad ignition wires, insufficiently polished wood, too thin a mat, and so on. There were, I think, twenty of these details altogether.

I took the cab away feeling rather ashamed of it. But a few days later, after I'd faithfully carried out their instructions, they examined it again and passed it. I was told afterwards by more experienced cab proprietors that if I'd had the sense to leave something conspicuously undone just where their eyes could light on it, instead of putting them to all that trouble, they would have been easier with me. But I doubt it. Not those two. It was their job to find something wrong, and they loved doing it. It's the natural policeman's attitude. And as it makes for good cabs I've got nothing against it.

HERBERT HODGE, *It's Draughty in Front* (1938)

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THE phrase, odd-sounding even in Victorian days, and now strange if not sinister to many ears, is I suppose, like "the King's Majesty," a compact mediaeval way of saying "Worship of the Divine." The term stood, my memory tells me, below a picture of an arcaded building in which rows of people were kneeling, while one—the officiating priest, or minister as I should then have called him—led their devotions in some indefinite manner. I was not deeply interested in it. In those days Sunday services constituted a weekly habit just as washing one's self in a bath did. One did not like it. My father would as soon have said he "liked" working in the bank. He

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did, as a matter of fact, delight in that. But he would never have said so. He did it because it was his duty. On Sundays he went to chapel. He certainly didn't like it except the singing. He was no man to digest sermons ; he had little spiritual activity. But he did it because it was his duty. With my mother it was more poignant. She had neither his happy and placid childhood to look back to, nor that implicit faith in progress that allowed him to envisage the future with such calm. There was a catch in her voice and her eyes brimmed with tears when she read to me passages from the New Testament, or listened to the earnest, then so often extempore, prayers that were offered, above all when she joined, in her rich and trained contralto voice, in the singing of such musical compositions as Mendelssohn's *O for the wings of a dove*. She had lost her mother when she was a tiny girl ; her stepmother had never been able to fill the void thus created. Her dearly-loved father had died and her brothers, both of whom had gone to sea, had been no comfort to her. She knew, as my father never did, the aching need of consolation.

I thus regarded the picture of *Divine Worship* with a twofold disfavour. It was on the one hand something regular and imposed on life, and I was of the generation that wanted to explore, to find something new. On the other where it ceased to be the regular habit, it became at my mother's urgency, something almost too piercing to be borne. On her lips, or reflected by her attitude, the phrases "For God so loved the world," "He gave His only-begotten Son" were so moving that, if they occurred during a religious service, I sought and held her hand, and pressed my cheek against the sleeve of her seal-skin jacket, partly to comfort her, and partly to comfort myself, but above all, I think, to hide my own emotion, which I was very shy of exhibiting. Yet we all joined in—Father away across the wide vistas of our place of worship, in his seat in the family pew above the clock,

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Mother in the central seat in the choir, and I by her side, adding my piping treble—when the prayers and readings and earnest exhortations that then filled the sermon gave place to singing. I still feel that much of the best and truest and cleanest religious feeling of which people such as we were could be capable, was to be found in the almost physical relief, so instant and obvious it was, of opening our lungs and joining in hymns and anthems.

But these matters were personal and private and do not place on record my most important reactions to religious observance. The thing that I want to record, because I fancy it is little known or perhaps incomprehensible nowadays, is this: I have since read with astonishment and something like alarm what were the impressions that many children of that time—the 'eighties and 'nineties—received of the religious atmosphere in which they grew up. But long before I read anything of the sort, I was conscious of the tremendous gulf which separated my happy circumstances from so many people who were then so much less fortunately placed than I. Everything I have learned about the matter since has only served to strengthen my conviction that, whatever may be thought of the basis of the religious teaching I received, its practical application was extraordinarily enlightened. We were, as far as definition goes, Dissenters or Nonconformists. But so far from having any of the bitter, mean, anti-church complexes which I knew dimly then, and have heard since almost universally attributed to such as we were, we had the highest respect for the Bishop and Dean and all the clergy in the Close and most of those in the parishes round about, and my parents had no scruples about attending any public or official services in any Anglican church whatever.

When, therefore, I saw a picture of what looked like an Anglican church service being carried on, while not



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deeply moved, I was not deeply antagonised. I shrank from the mystery that haunted many of the phrases in the Book of Common Prayer, but only to the extent that I shrank from dark passages and corners in my home. I had a clear idea of the dignity and beauty of our own cherished Cathedral, whose delicate spire made articulate the dawn and sunset skies I saw and loved from my bedroom window. I had a hardly less cherished affection for the five and thirty church towers of the city, which stood up even more distinctly then, above the rather lower general level of the roofs of the town. But this affectionate attitude to the Church of England was not entirely a matter of usual enjoyment of stately form and long association. We had for cousins a rector of a country parish and his family, and I knew that side of Anglican life by having gone through the fields to the old grey building standing on a slight ridge, amid its tumbled and tussocky churchyard, dominating the country for miles. It was strange, of course, the chanted or spoken responses, the few queer phrases that were rather scaring, the absence of prayers that were a direct conversation with God, and were instead a formal repetition of something someone had written down in a book, the brief authoritative sermon, if anything, preached rather *at* the congregation. Yet there were our cousins, and the well-known faces of essentially good people, so it didn't matter. There was all the same something bare, stark and primitive about it all. The nude old building looked primitive (it was restored fifteenth-century). It smelt primitive. The singing even of familiar hymns and chants had just the difference from the identical words and music rendered at my own place of worship that any of the surrounding tile-floored farmhouse kitchens had from the rooms of my town home. Accustomed as I was to hear the musical part of the service well and truly performed, I was partly amused and partly shocked at the tinny screeching of the village girls, and the ponder-

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ous lagging of the bass voices of the half-dozen village characters who made up the male portion of the choir. There was in particular the deaf old stonemason, who was also the sexton and who was always half a bar behind. This failing followed him into the responses so that he could be plainly heard declaring "All fall sways I utterly adore" instead of "All false ways I utterly abhor"! And I sympathised with the rector's wife, best and dearest of women, who earnestly tried to lead them into better paths by sheer virtuosity on the harmonium, and at the same time to cover their retreat. But, taking it all in all, the impression left with me at that early age was of two good and generous people doing more than their duty by a number of dreadfully poor and humble cottagers. That, and, on summer mornings, the warmth of the sunshine outside the porch, the bees on the waist-high hay, the blue vistas of Norfolk, seen through an old stone arch.

Our own Sunday service at home was a more sophisticated affair. By half-past ten Father would appear in his invariable black tail-coat, black made-up tie and square-topped hard felt hat, with a black overcoat for winter days. He had even a "best" walking-stick for Sundays, which consisted in a small boar's tusk, set upon a bamboo shank with a silver mount. If we didn't appear at the top of the stairs, he would call up to us, in his Norwich brogue: "Now then, together, you know the time!" Down we would come, replete with our fish and sausage breakfast, Mother had a last word with the maids and the metal-plated front door banged behind us.

The Sunday streets of those days are no longer recognisable. To begin with, everyone lived in them, as we did. And all the way we greeted friends and neighbours, the men top-hatted or hard-hatted, the women bonneted and bustled, the children in sailor suits or frocks according to sex.

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We had something less than ten minutes' walk between the high old Georgian houses and emerged, north of the river, into old Colegate, where stood Bacon's House, flint-faced and illuminated by its fourteenth-century merchant's mark. Here were ranged three of the city's most majestic churches, and three of its historic dissenting Meeting Houses. For Norwich, most English of towns, was always nicely balanced between its Royal Castle with its garrison, and its Cathedral with its Close (or garrison), both of which had been there since A.D. 1100, and on the other hand, its Dissenting proclivities. The place had always been one of the most Roundhead in the entire Kingdom, well within and one of the centres of the celebrated East Anglian Association. To the west of our Meeting House lay St. Mary's Baptist Meeting, founded by Daniel Bradford, one of Cromwell's Ironsides. To the east was the Old Meeting, a symmetrical, brick-fronted building, dated 1694, to which the Reverend William Bridge, after eighteen years' sojourn in Rotterdam, had led back his flock when the fear of persecution was over. The graveyard contained and still contains a stone commemorating one of that band of returned exiles, and anyone who knows the wonderful brick pavements of Dutch cities will recognise from whence the builders obtained the material for the path leading to the Chapel doors. It was no more than a path, for even when they returned the exiles were so uncertain of the future that they built their Meeting House a hundred yards from the street, up an alley that could be blocked. And they had, in the maze of yards and gardens at the back, a postern, or back entrance by which the congregation could, in an emergency, be evacuated. When I later read the novels of Dumas, the hairbreadth escapes and endless hide-and-seek in the jungle-like fastnesses of the City seemed only natural to me. Nothing he, or Victor Hugo, or Conan Doyle imagined was more intricate or apt for guerilla warfare, spying, thieving and

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hiding, than the passages, little-known gateways and garden middens behind Colegate.

Our own place stood next door. But the houses had been cleared away from before it, and instead of the alley by which it had once been reached there was a fair gravelled yard. If the Old Meeting represented what is to-day called the Congregational Union, and was historically the Independents, the sect revolting from Cromwell's attempt to Presbyterianise England on the Scottish model, then ours was the direct descendant of that Presbyterianism. By my day, however, the old place had shed the Shorter Catechism and had embraced Unitarian theology. This was partly why it was known to the older inhabitants of Norwich as The Devil's Cucumber Frame. The remainder of the reason was to be found in its handsome unique architecture. For whereas the nucleus of the original congregation was that of St. Stephen's Parish Church, who had "walked out" with their minister, a non-juror under the Act of Uniformity, and had found itself a home in two cottages knocked together, hidden from the street in 1687, by 1755 the Meeting had become so prosperous and the makeshift meeting house so dilapidated that it was resolved to build an adequate erection. After mature deliberation, the Trustees, discarding a dozen or so drawings made for them by their designer, pitched upon an octagonal design. Samuel Mottram gathered up the subscriptions and there arose a masterpiece of brick and timber, the outside rather plain but for the elegant portico, the interior capable of seating, on floor and galleries, some five hundred persons, in the classical baroque, the eight great timber pillars that carry the weight of the roof being squared trees, encased in fluted sheathing, with elaborate capitals. The whole of the seating was and is of dark-brown oak and the pillars in my childhood were "marbled," the veined yellow capitals reminding me of Stilton cheese and giving me a

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rare appetite for Sunday dinner. In between singing the hymns and chants I had opportunity to scan the many fine mural monuments and learn how Mrs. Sarah Pelly,

interr'd lieth

In Hope That her Christian Virtues, and Amiable Deportment  
Particularly her Catholic, Candid Benevolent and Peaceable Spirit  
which for many years contributed to the Happiness of this Congregation  
will be honoured on the Day of Our Lord  
And add to the Felicity of the blessed Society above

Or it might be yet another :—

To the memory of

BENJ. ELDEN

A Valuable member of this Society

This was erected

By his surviving consort, as a just Tribute of Respect

To so worthy a man, so kind a husband

The Communion table, a very fine piece of matchless walnut, was, of course, placed obstinately below the north bay, lest there should be any suspicion of an eastern position about it, while above it was the pulpit, converted into a rostrum, and above that towered the organ in its gilded case, wherein certain stops were said to have been obtained from that of the Cathedral, by devious means. It had anyhow, a beautiful *vox humana*.

But if I looked at the picture of Divine Worship with eyes unkindled by any very deep religious thrill, if my thoughts were of singing, and of black oak, and funny old inscriptions, and a hearty appetite for dinners, it was different when I first stood before that Communion table, holding my mother's hand in one of mine, and my little brother's in the other. A very fine white cloth had been spread upon the lovely honey-coloured walnut table ; on it stood the four exquisite silver chalices, the six patens with the monogram of Frances Rayning, the donor. The simple sentences the minister said to me as

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I was received into the Society of the Meeting, and the little posy of white flowers that symbolised it, I barely remember. But I remember the sunshine slanting down through the finely arcaded windows, and my mother bending down to kiss me, and her sudden stiffening as the organ burst forth, and the soaring of her rich voice, that made me think of cream, and angels' wings, and the sky showing brilliant white and blue up above the organ. I failed her then ; I always have and shall. I have not the capacity, of which she had abundance, for deep and true religious feeling. But what little I do know about it, I know through her. The picture in the *Book of Gays* was not within miles of it.

R. H. MOTTRAM,  
*Autobiography with a Difference* (1938)

## A KENTISH BOYHOOD

I HAVE been progressing too rapidly and must go back to the spring of 1896, which we made unforgettable by learning to bicycle. At first my mother opposed this ambition of ours, but we retaliated by taking to the road in Grandmama's old Bath chair. Starting from outside the front gate we could go nearly a mile down the hill, which was steep and had two sharp corners to make it exciting. Again and again we made the journey (after Mr. Moon had gone home), trying to break the record for how far we could get on the gentle gradient which ended at the crossroads where the oak railings of the old Pound still stood on an island of turf. My mother very soon decided that bicycling would be less dangerous, for bicycles had brakes, and people had begun to make remarks about the way we whizzed past them, steering erratically, as they toiled up the hill in their carriages. So a bicycle was bought and Tom Richardson, who had ridden one of the old high ones which you had to jump

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off when you wanted to dismount, soon helped us through our wobblings, and then three more machines were hired and we went for regular rides with Emily Eyles, who was timid but had learnt quite quickly.

But after a few weeks of exhilarating spins in every possible direction I developed mysterious pains in one of my hip joints, and Doctor Neild, who feared that I was outgrowing my strength, prescribed no more bicycling and a minimum of walking. This led to a second period of lying out on the lawn and feeling poetical. For several weeks I made the most of having a bad hip and enjoyed my inactivity until a craving for cricket put me on my feet again.

*from the above episode of a night*  
I now vaguely believed that I was going to be a poet, and had taken to reading Longfellow, Shelley and Tennyson. I was rather secretive about it, feeling that poetry was a thing I wanted to keep to myself. I still loved to listen to my mother reading *The Water Babies*, which had been the favourite book of my childhood ; but when she got to "Clear and Cool" I wished she would leave it out ; I preferred to be alone with it, for it was the most satisfying poem I had ever experienced. I had opened Shelley at random and the first few lines of *Queen Mab* had made me eager to read some more.

"How wonderful is Death  
Death and his brother Sleep !"

I soon found the rest of the poem impossible, but those lines remained in my head like a refrain. I had a tendency to expect all the best poetry to be gloomy, or at any rate solemn. Shelley was obviously a great poet because he wrote such a lot about mountains. He didn't make me see anything at all clearly, but when I chanced on lines like

"Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,  
Remain the records of their vain endeavour . . ."

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I felt as if I were being carried away by him into some tremendous mystery ; there was a photograph in the studio which gave me the same sensation ; my mother told me it was Tintoretto's Last Judgment.

Tennyson, on the other hand, made me see everything he wrote quite distinctly, and I was spellbound by his words and cadences. The Lady of Shalott was my idea of absolute perfection. With Shelley one never knew where one was, but in The Lady of Shalott I did know, because my mother and Ellen Batty had told me all about King Arthur and his Round Table long ago. Lying in bed I could imagine that it was a boat and float down to "many-towered Camelot" quite comfortably. I didn't try to think how it was done or what it was all about ; I was in a world of exquisite romance, seeing (as I afterwards found out) a series of sweetly lighted Pre-raphaelite pictures. Unconsciously I surrendered to the idea of seeing life reflected in a magic mirror, never suspecting that the moral of the poem was a warning to people who turn away from wholesome realities.

I too would some day write like Tennyson, I dreamed. I would break the spell which so far had prevented me from putting my wordless ecstasies into poetry. Had not Ellen Batty told me, after scrutinising the lines of my hand, that I was to become a poet ? And Batty was supposed to be awfully good at palmistry. *his pre*

Later on in the summer I got to know the realities of a river which went flowing down—not to Camelot but to Maidstone. This was, of course, the River Medway. My mother having resolved to get us taught swimming, we made a weekly expedition to Waterringbury.

It always seemed to be a grey and gusty afternoon when we got out at Waterringbury station. Pretending to be more brisk and cheerful than we really felt, we made our way to Ted Avery's landing stage, where boats could be hired, carrying the picnic-basket and our bathing togs. Ted Avery was a hardy and jocular man in a blue



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jersey, but the River Medway smelt of mud and its bank felt shivery and unfriendly when I was lowering myself into the water to be played like a fish on the rope and pole apparatus for teaching people how to swim. "Think of the way frogs do it," Ted Avery advised me from above ; but the water was going up my nose and I didn't want to be like a frog. I wanted to be like Tennyson.

Meanwhile my mother, who was a splendid swimmer, had dived in and was disporting herself as though the Medway were the nicest thing she'd ever been in, treading the water and telling me how to float on my back, until Emily Eyles emerged from behind an adjacent cow-shed to undergo similar instruction. Emily, who disliked the Medway as much as I did, never succeeded in learning at all. Afterwards we went in a boat and practised rowing, but the best thing in the afternoon was making a fire and boiling the kettle under an old willow.

One morning my mother bustled into the schoolroom and put an end to our leisure by announcing that a message had arrived inviting us all to go out in Mr. Arnold's steam-launch. Mr. Arnold lived about four miles away. He was our corn-merchant and we had always been interested in him because he owned some traction-engines and steam-rollers, which worked for the Kent County Council, and our friend "the stout young man" who gave us a photograph of himself and his engine was employed by him. Mr. Arnold also owned a motor car, which was the first we had ever seen.

More than once we had watched him charging along in it—a red-bearded man talking in a loud voice to his passenger, and evidently regarding our hill as a final test of his panting "two-and-a-half-horse Benz." My brothers, who were mechanically minded and had been reading a book called *Carriages Without Horses Shall Go!* considered Mr. Arnold a gallant pioneer. But my mother and I were still inclined to treat motor cars as an

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eccentricity. Anyhow I felt that something unexpectedly nice was happening when she and I started off in the pony-cart, escorted by my brothers on their bicycles. It was a cloudless day in the middle of July—just the sort of day when one ought to stop learning arithmetic and go off into the blue distance where Mr. Arnold's launch was getting up steam. As we trotted over the railway bridge at Paddock Wood station, I asked her how long it had been there, for I was looking at everything as though I had never seen it before, owing to the fact that we were going out on an adventure. The railway had been there about fifty years she said ; before that there had hardly been any houses there at all, which was why most of them had slate roofs and were so different from the pretty old thatched cottages and the one, about half-way to Mr. Arnold's mills, which used to have a toll-gate and had a house-leek on the roof and a thrush in a wicker cage hanging by the door. Mr. Arnold's house by the river was quite plain and very ugly ; he had no time for being picturesque and had only built it to be a corn merchant in.

But his motor car was there and my mother was persuaded to get into it. How well I remember the moment when it began to move and she was carried slowly away, sitting stiffly upright, as though she expected the whole thing to blow up before it reached the main road.

"I regard it with the deepest suspicion," she remarked facetiously when she alighted after a journey of about five hundred yards. Defensively polite, Mr. Arnold informed her that he'd been to Rochester and back last week, fifteen miles each way, without a shadow of a breakdown.

Soon afterwards we were on board the boat and ploughing peacefully toward Maidstone, with a couple of locks to go through, which made it even more interesting. Passing Watlington, we waved to Ted Avery, who

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was leaning on his boat-hook to watch us. We waved temperately, for we were feeling a little shy, though perfectly contented. Mr. Arnold spent most of his time supervising the engine, emerging occasionally to say something about it in his loud voice to his friend at the tiller, who had been introduced to us as what sounded like "Mr. Lelong."

Mr. Lelong was wearing a very gaudy striped blazer, and had an impressive moustache and a strong-smelling cigar. He was most attentive to my mother, who conversed with him about the landscape in what we used to describe as "her calling voice," which meant politeness tinged with reserve. "Allow me to offer you another 'am sandwich. The open air makes one peckish, don't it?" said Mr. Lelong. Thus pressed to partake, my mother ate another. Though why I should mention a remembered ham sandwich after all these years I really don't know, unless it is because we had such a happy day on the Medway.

By the summer of 1897 it had become obvious that my brothers preferred their workshop to anything else. They were very important about it, and only played cricket with me and Mr. Moon when they could spare the time. My younger brother had lost interest in moths and butterflies, so I did most of my collecting alone. Even "The Build" had been left to tumble down, though there was some talk of building a really up-to-date one in another part of the garden.

Their workshop was in the old cottage beyond the studio. The ground floor was still used for keeping garden tools and faggots in, and the mowing-machines also lived there; but the onions had been ousted from the upstairs room (though the smell remained) and a lathe and a carpenter's bench had been brought in. I can't remember what they did with the lathe, but they were very busy. They soldered things together, made bits of iron red-hot and then hit them with a hammer,

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and took in a paper called *The English Mechanic* which supplied them with fresh ideas. They also took out the works of the Queen Elizabeth clock in the dining-room and gave them a good oiling. The clock was never the same again ; in fact it gave up going. Making things or else finding out how they had been made—that was what my brothers liked now ; and while they were at work they were always singing a comic song which I was sick of hearing : “ Our lodger’s such a nice young man, such a nice young man is he, *so* good, *so* kind, to all the family. . . . ” The only bit of fun I got was when they broke several of the bulbous gun-metal handles off the studio windows, bored and “ turned ” them into shiny brass cannons, melted a clock-weight into bullets, and fired them at the vinery from the workshop window. How far the bullets went no one ever discovered ; we heard no sound of shattered glass, however, though we used real gunpowder—purloined from the potting-shed, where Reeves kept his old blunderbuss for shooting at jays and bullfinches.

But I knew how to enjoy being by myself. I could always take my fishing tackle down to the pond in the far corner of the steep orchard below the stable, which was several hundred yards away from the house. There I could feel contentedly cut off from the rest of the world, for Tom Richardson never came down to the pond and wouldn’t have interfered with me if he had. All through a sleepy summer afternoon, the clink of his pail up in the stable-yard and the grunting sound of the chaff-cutter in the barn were the only noises which reminded me that he was there ; and on Saturdays he was sure to be away playing in a cricket match.

The orchard pond contained some fair-sized roach and gudgeon ; carp and tench were supposed to be there also, but were so far unverified by capture. And although it was small I could make it seem larger by thinking of it as a lake in some foreign land. Like most

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things, the pond had a past history of its own. (Richardson said it needed cleaning out, and at one end it certainly was getting shallow, owing to mud silting in with the runnel which came down the ditch under the hedge.) I didn't want to know too much about its matter-of-fact antecedents ; but there was no denying that when old Harrison Weir had first stocked it with fish it must have been quite a well-kept pond. Anyhow that had been long before I was born. Now that it was in its meridian of deterioration and neglect, I wanted it to remain the same—with the fish leading their idle loitering lives and getting larger and more mysterious, and me only wanting to catch them so as to see what they looked like out of the water ; for I knew that they didn't taste at all nice when cooked. I had been told that Harrison Weir used to keep his prize fowls in the orchard ; Buff Orpingtons and Cochin-Chinas were the names which occurred to me he also used to do drawings of them, for he was quite a well-known nature artist. The workshop had been his studio, and I thought of him as a rather fussy little man with a scrubby sort of beard and a reddish nose, though I had never seen him. I vaguely associated him with things I liked, but I didn't much care for his animal drawings, some of which were in one of my Natural History books. The only thing I really had against him was the way he had added on to our house, which my mother always said was "full of waste space and designed without decorum." Its chief absurdity was a tiled spire, which towered to a height of sixty feet from the road on which the house stood and also made the chimneys smoke. Harrison Weir used to have a large lamp lit in the tower every night, so that people down in the valley could see it and say "That's where Harrison Weir lives"—to which the obvious reply was "Is it weally !"—the name of our house being Weirleigh.

Anyhow in Harrison Weir's time the old cottage, now muffled in ivy to the top of its single chimney, had been

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his unpretentious studio. (It was as difficult to imagine it not smelling of onions as it was to imagine my mother's much grander one without its pleasantly familiar redolence of turpentine.)

Sitting under the apple tree by the pond I wondered why I was so unpractical, compared with my brothers. . . . I couldn't even draw decently with my coloured chalk pencils—or my coloured inks either, I thought, as I gazed indolently at a huge white crinkly cloud which seemed like time standing still, so quiet was the afternoon. And when I copied out my poems for my mother they always went untidy after the first few words and never began at the right place on the page. Auntie Rachel had given me a toy printing-press, but I had made a hopeless muddle of trying to print Gray's *Elegy* (two lines at a time). Apart from the ink smudges, I couldn't get the *d*'s and *b*'s quite right, and the second stanza had read something like this :—

“ Now fabes the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his broning flight,  
And browsy tinklings lull the bistant folds.”

“ Browsy tinklings ” at any rate was almost like an improvement on the original version, I pondered, leaning my back against the trunk of the old apple tree, with only half my attention on my blue and red float, while skimming dragon-flies bemused me with their timeless flittings to and fro. Motionless as a shadow, I waited for a bite ; but the float refused to bob, and the hum of insects was like an eternal siesta. Sunbeams, filtering past the pond-reflected branches, explored the oblivion of that underworld with their drowned translucency ; very slowly, across the daydream water glades between the weeds and rotting snags, cruised the oldest of those uncatchable carp, in tantalising aloofness, making the orchard and the woodland below it seem tranced and

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strange with expectancy. Alone with my tin of bait and my wool-gatherings, I was in an undisturbed world of my own, localised and satisfying as such worlds always are.

When I'd had enough of fishing I would become busy, improving the shores of the pond. At the end where the water trickled away under the hedge, someone had once made a dam with stakes and pieces of plank ; enough remained to prevent the water running away too much. I called this the lagoon, and it had a thriving water-side population of water-boatmen and water-beetles. Minnows, alas, were absentees, but frogs were to be found there. The pond also contained rich deposits of white clay with which I made a snug little port, with jetties and roadsteads and the lighthouse and coastguard station a bit further round the bay. In squelching self-absorption I talked to myself as I thought it all out, adding one improvement after another and ignoring the irresponsible behaviour of the water-boatmen and other inhabitants. Tadpoles were a problem. As long as they were tadpoles it was impossible to pretend that they were anything different, and I was thankful when they became nice little frogs who hopped away to seek their fortunes in the wild-flower forest. Water-snails, on the other hand, seemed to have much more reliable personalities than tadpoles.

Leaving my fishing tackle and a few small fish under the apple tree to be called for on my way home, I climbed over the hedge and was in Gedges Wood, which quite easily became something else. In the sun-flecked shade under the leafy chestnut poles there was a smell of wild garlic ; and there were cushions of moss between the roots of oak trees where I could sit and listen ; or I could clamber into the upper branches and be a look-out man in the full glory of the happy late-afternoon sunshine. Or I would go on until I arrived at the banks of a small stream which lost itself in some marshy ground at the foot

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of the hill. This was a rushy region where there was a moorhen's nest among the sedges, and there was a jungle path through it where the thistles and ragwort grew higher than my head. It was a famous place for moths and butterflies. There were Cinnabar moths and lazy marsh-ringlets and three kinds of skippers (Dingy, Chequered and Grizzled). I once told my mother that I'd seen a Purple Emperor there, and her sympathetic enthusiasm almost made me believe that I had ; and anyhow it was the sort of place where I ought to have seen one.

Geddes Wood belonged to one of May and Bessie's brothers, and the long carriage road to his house on the hill-top went past the kingcup country where the moorhen lived. When I heard the rumble of his four-wheeled dog-cart I tried to forget who he was, and enjoyed the adventure of his not knowing that I was there as I reconnoitred him from the edge of the undergrowth. (It was all the better because he usually pretended to be rather fierce when he did happen to find one in the wood.) There he was, anyhow, jogging along from Paddock Wood station, on his way home from London, where he'd been looking after the paper-mill that he was a partner in. Flies buzzed round his horse's ears ; the groom-gardener was on the back seat, and he'd got that pink evening paper, *The Globe*, on his knee. The stop-press scores of to-day's county cricket were in it ; these I should have liked to take a squint at. But I'd just been on the banks of the Zambesi River, where anything might happen if you waited long enough ; my boots were full of rusty marsh water and I'd seen some very interesting newts. By the time the dog-cart had rumbled out of hearing I was an unflusterable character in one of H. Rider Haggard's stories, drying my feet in the sun and wishing I could make a fire and cook the evening meal. Up at the house the pump-yard bell might ring a second time for tea, but what did I care, even if the other



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two had eaten up all the cucumber sandwiches and everyone was wondering why I was so late ?

Looked at from our lawn, the Weald was, in my opinion, as good a view as anyone could wish to live with. You could run your eyes along more than twenty miles of a low-hilled horizon never more than ten or twelve miles away. The farthest distance had the advantage of being near enough for its details to be, as it were, within recognisable reach. There was, for instance, a small party of pine trees on the skyline toward Maidstone which seemed to be keeping watch on the world beyond—a landmark on the limit of my experience they always seemed, those sentinel pines. I often looked at them through my toy telescope. The idea of the places beyond those hills was a physical sensation which I experienced with ignorant relish while I gazed “into the blue distance.” That Rochester, Chatham and Strood could possibly be unattractive towns was a thought which had never occurred to me. The foreground was an easy-going prospect of meadows, orchards and hop-gardens, supervised by the companionable cowl of hop-kilns (or oast-houses, if you prefer it). The Medway was there, winding lazily past Watlingbury on its way to Sheerness, where Uncle Don went when the destroyers from the Works were being tried ; he always called the Medway the Mudway, and thought the Thames a much better river. Sometimes, in quiet weather, I could just hear from beyond the horizon, a faint muffled thud, which meant, I was told, that they were testing a big naval gun at Sheerness.

Leisurely trains went along the valley, up to London and down to the coast, whistling derisively when they bustled through our station without stopping ; goods trains loitered along with clanking buffers, whistling in a good-humoured way, and reduced by distance to the size of a toy apparatus.

And there was I, for whom, at the age of eleven,

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London meant little more than going up for the day to see Auntie Rachel or "The Dons" as we called Uncle Don and his family. For me the future didn't even provide the prospect of going to school, for my mother was opposed to the idea of our leaving home. Tomorrow I should be rambling heedlessly in the wood or angling by the orchard pond, dreamily inheriting the scents and rumours of 1897, ignorant in that sunlight of long ago where a dallying bee buzzed humdrum happy summer for me while the statesmen of Europe provided material for Tenniel's weekly cartoon in *Punch*. Looking across the Weald I foresaw nothing but the Jubilee bonfires which were ready to be set alight that evening. Up in London dear old Queen Victoria was driving through the streets with a bevy of foreign princes tit-tapping along behind her carriage, and everyone feeling as if she was their grandmother. No one could tell what was going to happen any more than I could see beyond our safe-looking hills. While Wirgie played the piano after dinner people were jingling out to the Opera in hansom-cabs. A brilliant season was in full swing around them, and they knew as little of their future insecurity as my tortoise Joey, who died the next winter of being dug up to see how he was getting on while hibernating.

After luncheon I got into my brown velveteen riding suit and waited for Richardson to bring the horses up to the house. He always made going out for a ride seem an important event and looked very smart in his livery. He would have considered it a disgrace to have worn his stable clothes when taking me out, and I never saw him drive even a pony-cart without looking as though it was a carriage and pair. Like Sportsman, he had perfect manners. When he had assisted me into the saddle, which was rather a long way up, my mother came out with a note in her hand which she wanted him to leave at Major Horrocks's house. I knew already that the note was to say that she couldn't come to tea that afternoon.

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It wasn't much more than a mile to the Major's ; but it was too hot for walking, she said, and if Richardson were to drive her I shouldn't get my ride. I now asked Richardson which way we were going ; he suggested that we might go round by Brenchley and leave the note on our way home. There was an all-day match at Brenchley and we could watch some of it over the hedge. This was exactly what I'd wanted. Tom had a way of anticipating one's wishes. So off we trotted, up the hill, in the opposite direction from Major Horrocks's house. ~~At~~ At the top of the hill we met a traction-engine, which with some horses might have meant the possibility of tumbling off. But Sportsman passed it as though it ~~wasn't~~ wasn't there, and I patted his neck appreciatively. Sylvia, a harmless character who usually went in the dog-cart, gave a sort of curtsy to the traction-engine, which was politely standing still. As we went along I hoped we should meet somebody who knew me, for I was very proud of being seen on such a big horse. But we saw no one until we got to the cricket ground, except when we overtook the curate, whose opinion I didn't value much, though he always made great efforts to be pleasant. "He'd look a sight better in that black straw hat without his Monkey Brand beard," remarked Richardson ; to which I callously agreed. A few minutes later we were watching the match ; by standing up in the stirrups I could see quite well over the high hedge. Brenchley were batting and the little scoring board on the other side of the ground showed that they had been making plenty of runs. We weren't the only spectators in the road. As usual, the brewer's dray had pulled up and looked like being there for the rest of the afternoon. The drayman, whose horses were half asleep, was watching the game in a heavy indolent attitude which seemed suitable to the barrels of beer behind him, while the youth who drove the baker's van appeared conscious that he ought to be continuing his round though always

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unable to tear himself away until he had seen what happened next. A little further along the hedge was the tea-tent, which was full of talkative local ladies and would soon contain the curate. Most of the Brenchley players were sitting under the chestnut trees on the far side of the field, and at a respectful distance from the tea-tent was the *Rose and Crown* beer-tent, well patronised by the villagers, one of whom bawled "Call that ker-ricket!" whenever the Horsemonden last bowler sent down a bumpy one. Horsemonden being the next village to Brenchley, there was strong local rivalry in the match, and feeling in the beer-tent ran high. Every time one of the batsmen made a good stroke I envied the apparent ease with which he did it, particularly when it was George Collins, who played for Kent as a professional before I was born and still walked six miles each way to play for Brenchley. When Collins had completed his fifty and the church clock struck four, Tom said: "We'd better be jogging on now if we're going to leave the mistress's letter at Mascalls." Reluctantly I rode away, wondering whether *I* should ever make a fifty for Brenchley.

Captain Ruxton's farm was on the hill-top beyond the village, and when we got there he was out in the field with his coat off, helping his men to get the hay in. As soon as I saw him I began to wave with my riding-whip, for I was fond of him and he always called me his unofficial godson. Too busy to talk to me, he leant on his hay-rake and watched us go past. Behind him was that wonderful view of the Kentish Weald which one got from his big meadow, and a good picture of a man of Kent he must have made as he stood there, in the prime of life, long before the world became the troubled place it now is. Farmer Ruxton, his friends used to call him, and no name could have suited him better.

It was the sweet of the year, and the countryside in its afternoon sunshine was like drowsy Elysium, but my

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eyes were too young to approach that loveliness through my mind, and all I thought was that somehow Captain Ruxton reminded me of a partridge. I couldn't exactly say why ; and Richardson soon recalled me to reality by telling me to hold the old horse together and not go lounging along with such slack reins. Trotting on for a couple of miles we came to Major Horrocks's lowrambling house, which had creepers round its windows and gave one a feeling of friendliness. As we went in at the gate I observed that he'd got several people there. The tea-table was out on the lawn, and the warm-hearted old Major hurried across to greet me. "Hello, Fred Archer," he exclaimed in his throaty convivial voice. I had a jockey cap to match my suit, and as I knew that Archer had been a famous jockey, I felt pleased by the salutation. But I became shy and awkward when the others crowded round me, patting Sportsman's Roman nose and making jokes, which I didn't think funny, about his way of standing with his knees bent forward. Major Horrocks himself wasn't much of a rider, anyhow. Captain Ruxton had a story about how they'd once gone out hunting with the West Kent together. The Major had tumbled off at the first jump and remained recumbent until he'd been given a good dose of brandy. So when he went too far by saying that my mount looked a bit lonely without his cab I felt inclined to ask him if he'd been out with the West Kent lately. But he soon put things right by making me get off and go and have some fruit-salad out of a large bowl. And then his sister, who was stone-deaf and much older than he was, and wore a poke-bonnet, led me away to the lily pond where I helped her to feed the goldfish with breadcrumbs. There were crowds of them and they were very large. Owing to her deafness Miss Horrocks's voice went quavering up and down in the queerest way ; but not being able to answer her made it quite easy to be with her, and I was always vaguely impressed by having

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heard that she had once been kissed by George the Fourth (whose face I associated with a four-shilling piece which had been handed to my mother in a shop when she was being given change for a sovereign).

Major Horrocks had a lovely garden and grew all sorts of things which no one else had got. Pointing her stick at a flowering shrub, Miss Horrocks told me that it came from the Caucasus and had been introduced into England by one of the old gentlemen at the tea-table, a club friend of the Major's who had been all over the world finding plants for people's gardens. When she took me back to the table I sat gazing at him with discreet curiosity, wondering whether he travelled in the clothes he was wearing now. He was tall, and wore loose lavender-coloured trousers and patent leather button boots. A little further up one came to what looked like a buff evening waistcoat. He had a rich red tie with a ring round it which contained a sort of fossilised beetle, and his dark jacket had a brown velvet collar. When I ventured to look at his face, his pale-blue eyes met mine with an amused expression in them. "Sizing me up, eh? Well, and what do you think of it all, my boy?" he inquired, fanning himself with a wide-brimmed grey hat which had I Zingari colours round it, though I didn't know what the ribbon was then. I could only smile shyly; but I was thinking that his crisp whity-gold beard went very well with his rig-out, and that his voice was more like being read aloud to than talking. I now add that he had the look of an eccentrically distinguished connoisseur—the sort of elderly gentleman who is incomplete without an intaglio ring.

By now I had begun to need relaxation from behaving with decorum, so I wasn't sorry to rejoin Richardson and feel natural again. As soon as we were out of the gate I told him about the old codger who'd been to the Caucasus. I couldn't say for certain where it was but I intended to find out on one of Moonie's maps. Meanwhile we were

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on the dull bit of road from Paddock Wood, but half-way up the hill we overtook the carrier's van which brought our parcels from the station. Homewood the carrier always kept wicket in the matches on our village green. While Tom was telling him about the Brenchley and Horsemonden match I wondered whether he'd got our box of books from Mudie's Library ; it didn't seem quite polite to ask him, though. When helping my mother make the last Mudie list I had put down *Under the Red Robe* by Stanley Weyman, with two crosses against it to show that it was really wanted. So after seeing Sportsman unsaddled I hurried up to the house. By then the box had been delivered and I was able to pounce on my Stanley Weyman before one of my brothers bagged it. Tea was going on in the dining-room. Sitting on my book, I bubbled over with information about everything that had happened to me since I last saw them, while Fräulein knitted and my mother occasionally told me that I should ruin my digestion if I ate so fast. After tea my brothers refused to play cricket and returned to their workshop, so I went off to the fort, with *Under the Red Robe* under my arm. I had made up my mind to try and read it slowly, which I'd never yet succeeded in doing with Stanley Weyman's books, for they were so exciting that one simply gobbled them, especially when one got near the end.

The fort had been built by my brothers, with amateur assistance from me. It dated from the previous autumn, and stood on a bank in the wilder part of the garden, most of which could be overlooked from its roof. For the fort had two storeys and was nearly fifteen feet high at one end. It had started as a low shanty among some old laurels and the second storey had been interwoven with them and the middle branches of a mountain ash. Poles, planks, sheets of galvanised iron and a disused cucumber frame had gone to its making. The second storey was a cabin with one small window and the cracks filled up with

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putty. To get on to the roof one clambered up a ladder fixed to the outside. There was a little windmill which clattered merrily while the whole edifice creaked and swayed with the trees, so that we felt as though we were on a ship.

Now that I come to think of it, the fort was not unlike one of the above-ground dug-outs I was in during the war, except that it had no earth on the top. But it was constructed to keep out nothing more dangerous than grown-ups, and the only shooting we did was with seed potatoes hurled from sharp-pointed sticks aimed at the gardeners or even at Fräulein, when we saw her cruising along the lower lawn with her crotchet-work and couldn't resist a long-distance shot at her. Sitting in the cabin after dark during the winter with a couple of candles guttering, we felt very snug and independent, though smoking home-made clay pipes filled with tobacco from my mother's cigarettes hadn't been much of a success. One day I'd had a bright idea and daubed the inside of the cabin blue, red and yellow, with oil-paints from her studio. Afterwards I wished I hadn't, for the smell of paint became monotonous.

By the summer of 1898 the fort had reached a state when there seemed nothing more to be done to it in the way of improvements. My brothers put up a lightning conductor, but after that they ceased to use the place much and I often went there when I wanted to be alone and feel poetical. Sitting on the roof now with my chin on my knees, I gazed across the valley and lost myself in a daydream about becoming the G. F. Watts of poetry and making centuries for Kent and exploring the Caucasus and having romantic adventure like the hero in a Stanley Weyman story. Better than it had ever been before, summer was around me to be accepted by my senses like a vague thought of familiar happiness. Haphazard as the architecture of the fort were my reasonings about life, and most of my beliefs were founded



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on misunderstandings. But the blue evening distance was beckoning me beyond those few known miles which ended, more or less, with the Medway, and after that became imbued with the magic of ignorance, like the names of places which weren't merely railway stations along the line. There was Snodland, for instance—a village I'd only heard of, though it was less than fifteen miles away. The name of Snodland made me think of its inhabitants as always sitting in a huge oasthouse, half stupefied by the fumes of drying hops, talking in blurred voices and dressed like the peasants in a German fairy-story. Such place-names were like the titles of certain books on the drawing-room shelves. I had often looked at the backs of such books, without ever bothering to open them, because stories of my own were produced by their names. *Green Pastures* and *Piccadilly* was one; and *My Husband and I*, by Tolstoy, was another, though that one created a gloomy impression, since it made me think of my father and mother being unhappy together, and I dimly wondered why the word husband always felt so sad. Anyhow, some day I would bicycle miles out beyond Maidstone and discover what was there; and then the blue distance wouldn't seem so far away, or give me that funny heartache feeling which I couldn't understand. Beyond the garden and the wood below it, and across the valley, were those distant hills; and the future seemed to lie beyond them. It was from there that visitors came to see us, out of their far-off lives which were so unknown and interesting, like things that happened in books. . . .

Emerging from my meditations, I overheard the uneventual sounds of that June day which was now drawing near to sundown. I heard my brothers hammering in their ivied workshop, and the shouts and pan-beatings of a bird-scaring boy in the cherry orchard across the road, and the persistent voice of Fräulein calling one of the cats.

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After that I get one more memory of myself, at the very end of the day. I am in the bedroom which I no longer share with my younger brother. I have been forbidden to read in bed and many a time in the past my candle has been taken away from me. But I have provided myself with a surreptitious night-light, and by its flickering glow I am steadily reading *Under the Red Robe*. As soon as I hear my mother coming briskly along the passage I blow out my night-light and hide it under the bed-clothes. But she passes my door and I hear the handles of her dressing-table drawer rattling in the next room. And then I don't seem to be wakeful enough to begin reading again. To-day's happenings move indolently across my mind, gradually becoming blurred and topsy-turvy. Very gently the night air stirs and sways the tall white window curtains, bringing the surf-like sound of a train going along the valley. Leaving behind it silence and profound peace, the train seems to be carrying me with it into the land of Nod.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON,

*The Old Century and Seven More Years* (1938)

## ECONOMIES AND CHARITIES

WE sometimes think of the later Victorian and the Edwardian times as days of care-free opulence, when everyone was rich and secure, and when neither individuals nor nations knew what it meant to stand on the brink of bankruptcy. In a way this is true. Incomes seemed to be safe and secure when I was a child. Young people married possessing either a large or a small fortune invested in "the Funds," and they knew just what that fortune was. Every year "the Funds" produced the same income upon the investments. To this solid permanent foundation, professional men added the steadily rising incomes derived from their pro-

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fessions ; and they were confident that as their families grew, their resources were bound to grow correspondingly.

Yet that old prosperity rested upon a background of frugality unattempted to-day, although everyone complains of poverty, a thing which nobody used to do. It was considered bad form to talk about money, whether to say you had too much or too little of it. You were expected to live up to your position and under your income, and to say nothing about it : you tacitly kept a watchful eye on your bankbook to make sure that this precise balance was always maintained.

My father was a country parson with a large house and a small living, and he had ten children. He also had a great sense of ecclesiastical dignity. The population of Wilton with its little hamlet of Netherhampton was about two thousand. There were two churches and two curates. Nowadays this would be an excessive staff, especially as my father hardly ever left home even for a day. But in his eyes it was essential that at least two clergymen should always be present at the Sunday services in Wilton church ; he thought a solitary parson so inadequate as to be almost ridiculous there. He was extremely active in mind as well as in body, and he was for ever thinking of new mediums for Church work, all of which cost money ; and yet he was determined that the old things should always be done in the old opulent way, however many new things arose to be paid for too. Nothing would induce him to cut the cassock according to the cloth. So it came about that most of the small accounts published annually in the parish magazine ended with the words : "*Balance paid by Rector.*"

Then there were the expenses of his family and household, by no means small ones. Although there was no bathroom at the Rectory, everyone had as many baths as they do to-day, taking them, however, in tubs in the privacy of their own rooms. My father was revolted by

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the idea of people meeting and passing on the threshold of a bathroom, or of anyone's stepping into a bath just vacated by someone else. Such things were not tolerated under his roof. Extra baths had therefore to mean extra work, and we had a constant succession of under-house-maids, nursery-maids and between-maids whose chief work was to carry cans of water upstairs. A dim background was built up of charwomen doing the "heavy work"—raking out stoves, or scrubbing passages and back stairs.

At one time, six of my brothers were simultaneously at public schools, which must have meant an enormous annual expense ; but in spite of these fresh calls on their income, my parents continued to live in the style of their parents before them—formal dinners, with a good many courses, and two waitresses if the number of diners was more than three. My father was an ascetic man with a small appetite, and the length of a dinner was for him purely a matter of decency and good manners. For instance, when one of his friends sent him a present of game, he would never allow it to be treated as a main course. Game had always to appear as an extra following the joint. I remember the pained surprise with which I once heard him say to my mother : " Is *this* our dinner ? ", when she once broke this rule and allowed a brace of pheasants to be served as the *pièce de résistance*. What was in my father's mind was this. He would not live on his friends, and they would not expect him to do so. Their presents were enjoyable *bonnes-bouches* : nothing more. In those days no decent people bought game in shops. Owners of shooting did not sell their game, but gave it away in lavish presents to their friends ; and it was generally believed that bought game had been killed by poachers, so that its buying ought to be discouraged.

When I remember the number of joints which hung in the larder at Wilton Rectory ; and the huge unpacking

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when "the stores" arrived—tin canisters and earthenware jars of sugar, coffee, cocoa-nibs, tea, rice, raisins, sultanas and prunes—I see that our establishment was run on a scale unknown in the country rectories of to-day. Yet this lavishness was accompanied by economies even more unknown.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century there was of course no central heating at Wilton Rectory ; but the hall, the passages and the wide upstairs corridor were all warmed by a huge, hideous and miraculously effective stove which stood four-square in the middle of the hall. It was taken away in the summer, and however cold the autumn might be, it never reappeared until after the Confirmation in the middle of November. There was a good reason for this. The Bishop robed in the study, and from there he always began his ceremonial procession to the church, my father marching before him, clad too in his robes, and carrying the Pastoral Staff. Bishop Wordsworth was built on a large scale, and it would have been impossible, with any safety, to manœuvre the vast expanse of surplice and lawn sleeves round the often red-hot stove, so we shivered till the Bishop had paid his visit.

After that, the blacksmith carried in the elephantine black monstrosity and planted it in the middle of the hall, its long chimney being carried horizontally to a hole in the wall over the door which led to the kitchen regions. From that moment till the end of the winter, the house was bathed in the soft diffused warmth which spread from the stove in all directions. Except for its appearance, it was the best stove I ever knew, but nowadays no house-proud family would tolerate such a hideosity in their midst.

Not one ounce of fuel was ever bought to feed the stove. The ashes from all the grates in the house were collected to be carefully sieved by the garden-boy in the back yard. He threw them against an upright sieve

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which looked like an easel. The fine dust made the kitchen garden path, and the large cinders were burnt in the stove. Nothing else. In fact the stove shared the economical standards of the day. It refused to burn anything but those old ashes. If a housemaid hoped to start it more quickly in the morning by beginning it with a shovelful of coal, the stove at once "clinkered up" and went out, and all the world knew what she had done. Never was there a more cosy, more permeating or more effective system of heat.

There was no electric light in Wilton, and when we moved from room to room, we carried our oil lamps with us. A characteristic memory of my father is the sight of him coming from the study, carrying a lamp through the hall to the drawing-room, or leading the way in to dinner with a lamp in his hand, to be placed on the side-board for the parlour-maid's use. Candles burnt on the dining-room table, and in the bedrooms only candles were used, so at sundown a row of flat silver bedroom candlesticks was placed on a small cabinet in the hall. These were carried by anyone who went upstairs after dark. A box of matches stood beside the candlesticks ; and indeed, as is the case to-day, matches were to be seen on the tables in every room, though they were not then used for lighting cigarettes. Smoking was only allowed in the room which had been the schoolroom, and which was well out of the way ; though when the servants were safely in bed, my father and his male guests used to perambulate to the Servants' Hall where they smoked in secrecy for an hour or two.

Matches in the sitting-rooms were meant only for lighting candles and for sealing letters ; and as soon as the winter fires were lit, the matchboxes were moved into the background, and in front of each was placed a vase ("vause" my father called it) containing paper spills. How near we then were to the poetry of life ! A girl lighting her candle with a spill, lit from a stove in which

burnt the ashes of last winter's fires, was in the tradition of the Vestal Virgins : while the man who carried the light to his pipe from the fire in his grate, was of the family of Prometheus.

Then there were economies in journeys. To begin with, their numbers were limited. Travelling by train now costs if anything rather more than it did before the war, but it was then looked upon as quite an exceptional expense. Country people did not think of running up to London every week, or of staying in a different house every week-end. Many engagements were fitted into one journey. When I once developed an alarming cough, and was taken to London to see a specialist, my mother and I left Wilton station at half-past seven on a winter morning, so that we might get full value for our tickets, as we should thus have time to see not only the doctor, but the National Gallery and the South Kensington Museum as well.

People stayed in each other's houses more seldom, but when they came, they stayed longer. They "saved their pockets" by making a round of visits arranged on an elaborate plan worked out with the help of Bradshaw. Many visits lasted a week or a fortnight, and some of my uncles and aunts always came for a month every summer.

When our guests arrived, only very honoured or very lame ones were met at the station by a cab. Everyone else was escorted on foot, to and from the station by a large or small contingent of the family, their luggage being brought to the house in the donkey-cart, or pushed by the garden-boy in a wheelbarrow or a pair of trucks. Those walks to and from the station helped to keep us and our guests on easy terms with the townspeople. Everybody knew who had come to stay. When my sister came home for the first time after her marriage, we, most of us, met her at the station, and a jolly old dame called out as we passed her house :

"Any family, Mrs. Collins?"

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"Not yet."

"Never mind. If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again."

These friendly greetings cannot reach a passing motor car.

I remember one funny little economy which I am sure has been now outgrown by even the most old-fashioned of nannies. When we learnt to sew, our nurse would place the hem or seam for us, and then tack it. When we had laboriously and clumsily crawled down our piece of work with the needle, we were taught to draw out the tacking thread and wind it upon an empty reel. It was then used again and again.

Perhaps cotton was very expensive in those days, for when my mother gave out garments and children's clothes to be made before Christmas by poor seamstresses out of work, she always gave them too the cotton to sew with. But no one was given a whole reel. It was our part as children to wind off on little twists of paper the quantity allotted for each garment, and this allowance, and no more, was given away with the material.

Paper and string were, of course, carefully saved from all parcels which came to the house, and the string was made into neat loops and kept in a drawer in the dining-room. In an adjoining drawer were placed the half-sheets of unused notepaper, torn from the backs of letters. We played an enormous number of word games at Wilton, and these were written on the large sheets of paper which had contained parcels from the grocer. To this day, the mention of certain games calls up for me the faint far-distant aroma of Mr. Gidding's brand of China tea, and I see again the very pretty early nineteenth-century trade advertisement which was printed in pale-red ink on the paper which he used for packing his most homely parcels.

Sending the boys to school was a costly business, and so for a long time there was no governess for the "little



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girls." Our "education" would be despised to-day. My mother taught us herself. We learnt everything by heart—pieces of poetry, passages from the Bible, history, geography, or French and Latin grammar ; and then she came to us for about half an hour to "hear us." After that she wrote copies for us, in her lovely harmonious handwriting, leaving us by ourselves writing for an hour or so. I only had lessons from real governesses for four years of my life, and money was certainly saved on the education of my sisters and me, but though our training was very unconventional, I think we were not any the worse for that. We learnt how to read for ourselves, in English and in French, and were given plenty of opportunity to do both. We learnt how to live in the family circle, which costs nothing, and is very useful in after life.

As children we were abominably dressed. This was of course partly from economy, though it must also be confessed that my mother was completely destitute of dress-sense. She was indeed in many ways blind to appearances. Her humorously affectionate vision saw chiefly what was beneath the surface. She did appreciate my father's good looks, but as for her children, she loved them equally whatever their appearance. She did not care what we looked like. In fact she did not know. Mildred and I once stood on the platform at Wilton station, watching my parents starting for a flower show. My father turned and said something to Mamma. We read the words on his lips :

"Let us take the little girls."

She at once agreed, and came to the window to call us. Then we saw him say something else. It was this :

"No. We can't. They are too untidy."

I still feel the humiliation, but I am sure he was right. We probably looked complete ragamuffins, but my mother would never have seen it. Nor did she remember the episode afterwards. It was not the kind of thing she

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would think of again, though I do once remember her being most indignant when Gertrude Lady Pembroke said to her with affectionate mockery :

“ Dear Mrs. O., always so nice and shabby.”

My father dressed well, and wanted his wife to do so too. He once looked at her rather critically, aware that something was wrong, and wondering what could be done about it.

“ That dress does not look right. It wants *something*. Perhaps a knot of cherry-coloured ribbon ? ”

The cherry-coloured ribbon became a family saying, but something more than that was wanted to make my mother “ look right.”

Poor people were terribly poor when I was a child. Mrs. Jeffery was one of the poorest. She “ lived on ” the parish, or rather, she received from the Guardians a weekly allowance of half a crown and a loaf of bread, the under part of which she sold, every week, for twopence, to a neighbour who had a large family of children. She paid a rent of two shillings a week for her house in Fancy Row, an L-shaped group of quite well-built houses dating from early in the last century. They stood off the street, round a piece of garden land. Her sitting-room was of a good size, and was well-proportioned, as rooms in the smallest houses still were at that date. Here she sat, facing life on eightpence a week and the top of a loaf. Her case was not exceptional. Hers was the usual allowance given to a solitary woman ; and probably the Guardians hoped, by means of this economic pressure, to induce the poor lonely old things to go into the Workhouse. There, even in those days, they would have been cared for as they never could be in their own homes, but they one and all dreaded the prospect. However few and valueless one’s personal belongings may be, they make the familiar setting of one’s life ; and it is hard that the world should prematurely bring home to one that “ we brought nothing into this world, neither may we

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carry anything out," especially when it invites us to leave this world, not for a Heavenly Mansion, but for an "Institution." It must seem like a first and agonising death thus to be torn from all one's little treasures ; and everyone collects a few of these in the course of a long life, even though it may be a long life of unbroken poverty.

Mrs. Jeffery's neighbour, for instance, Mrs. Wilkins, lived in equal penury, and apparently had always done so, yet both her dress and her cottage indicated that, if she had been born in another sphere, she would have been a dilettante collector of *objets d'art*. Her thin bony form was clothed in the most poverty-stricken garments, but she draped them about her person in the arty manner of the 'eighties, fastening them here and there with baroque brooches and buckles, while her meagre arms tinkled with bracelets. Round the bent and broken brim of her dilapidated hat she tossed a fluttering blue veil, through which she peered at her visitors with bleary, half-blind eyes. Her dirty little room was a museum. Its walls were covered with her collection of jugs. She possessed hundreds of these—a mixed and motley jumble, none of them of much beauty or value ; yet they ensured for their owner a happy variety of colours, shapes and memories upon which to rest her worn-out eyes. This storehouse of rather dirty antiques was no doubt a less hygienic abode for Mrs. Wilkins' declining years than would have been a ward at the Workhouse, with its clean sanitary walls ; and yet, who would hesitate if asked to choose between the two ?

Lean as she was, Mrs. Wilkins looked less starved than Mrs. Jeffery, so that possibly at some time in her life she had been better nourished. She had perhaps been in service in some house where she acquired her artistic tastes. Mrs. Jeffery, on the other hand, had always eked out a poor living by part-time labour on a farm. She had often slung across her shoulders the baby she was

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nursing at the time, while she ran up to the fields for a few hours' weeding or hoeing ; or she had gleaned a few ears of corn to be ground into flour by the miller. At eighty years of age, she frequently told us of a red-letter day in her life when, as a little girl, she had gone to tea at the farmhouse and had been given "real butter."

Mrs. Jeffery once came to see me in great distress.

"I've 'ad a misfortune," she said. "I've a-broke me po, and 'e was such a beautiful po. 'E 'adn't got ne'er an 'andle, but 'e 'ad a very nice rim. 'E wer old Mr. Rawlence's po, and when I did use to go up there to mend the carpet, I did see this po, and I allers liked un. And then, when I 'ad me fire and all me things was burnt, Master Freddy Rawlence brought un down to me, and I've a 'ad un ever since."

We both felt very shy at the idea of going into a shop to replace this indispensable piece of property, but at last I faced a lady shopkeeper who promised to "pack it invisibly," as they say.

Yet, in spite of Mrs. Jeffery and Mrs. Wilkins, we often remarked in those old days that there was little acute poverty in Wilton. This sounds incredible in face of the actual incomes of these old women, but although I have told the truth about their allowances, that is not the whole truth. Wilton was and is a small place, and in those days at least, we made a family party. Nobody sat down to a hot joint for dinner without making sure that at least one of their poorer neighbours was doing the same. Every day, in the streets of Wilton, we saw, between twelve and one, three or four of the pony carriages in which old ladies were then in the habit of taking the air. These were low basket-shaped vehicles containing two seats which faced each other. The owner of the carriage usually held the reins, with another lady seated at her side. If there was a third member of the party, this rather unlucky person was perched on the opposite seat, ducking her head and trying to avoid

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the reins which were passed over her shoulder. The pony-carriages I speak of contained Mrs. Rawlence, Mrs. Naish and Miss Nightingale, and during those pre-luncheon drives the front seats were usually stacked with baskets containing basins. In these were slices of meat cut off from the steaming joints, and surrounded by vegetables and gravy. But people without pony-carriages were about the same business at the same time ; and my early memories of the Wilton streets about the hour of noon, show them peopled with women running into each other's houses, carrying steaming basins covered with cloths.

In those days there was a good deal of drunkenness in the country, and this was a distress to old Mrs. Rawlence. Still, she was well aware that on Sundays, when the public-houses were shut, the men would miss their pint of beer, and might feel depressed. Mrs. Rawlence remembered the Children of Israel who picked up a double portion of manna before the Sabbath Day, and so Saturday was her greatest day for driving about. She went to the drunkards' houses bringing them jugs of strong coffee and of delicious and very concentrated consommé. Thus she hoped, not only to minister to the thirst of the coming day, but also to suggest that other drinks might always take the place of beer.

When Mrs. Rawlence died, her husband endowed a Wilton Parish Nurse, thinking mainly of the old people who would miss the kind friend visiting them in their poverty. Nurse Turner filled this post to perfection. Hers is one of the unforgettable Wilton figures. She was a tall woman, with an affectionate rolling gait, and an expression of calm beneficence. She always carried a round basket in her hand, and in summer she wore, instead of her nurse's bonnet, a very wide white straw hat. She was a liaison officer between those people in Wilton who had enough and to spare, and those who didn't know how to make ends meet. She was equally

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at home in the houses of both sorts, and she knew people's possessions better than they knew them themselves. She came into a house, with her quiet, dear smile, to ask for the loan of "the drinking-cup on the top shelf of your china cupboard," for "those warm woollen slippers that your dear mother found such a comfort when she was ill," or for "the hatbox that came with your hat from Style and Gerrish, which I could use to make a cradle over a little boy's broken leg." People were delighted to know that their treasure had been observed by Nurse Turner, and also that they could so easily do something to give comfort to a sick neighbour.

This "Lady Bountiful" system is discountenanced to-day, and of course it could never have touched the fringe of the poverty in large industrial towns; but in Wilton we all knew each other well and were naturally neighbourly without any touch of patronage or of pauperising.

Past generations of Wilton people took their part in supplementing the inadequate Poor Relief of those days. Wilton is rich in old "Charities," bequests made by eighteenth-century weavers or other manufacturers, to provide schooling, marriage portions, old-age pensions and almshouses for poor people in Wilton. Thus the prosperity of the town two hundred years ago overflows into to-day.

Then there was the Church. The Wilton Almshouses are mostly the modern forms of mediaeval priories and hospitals, of which there were many in the town, and the spirit of their founders has lived on. Out-relief was at first only an allowance supplementary to the charity of Christian people, and certainly Wilton congregations never thought their responsibilities over when they had paid their rates. My father, as Rector, made it his personal care that no one in his parish should be without a fire; and every month the Church people subscribed largely for the "Sick and Poor." This money was

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chiefly distributed by District Visitors in the form of food tickets.

So no one was quite forgotten in Wilton when they were in difficulties ; yet, however well these funds were spent, life must have been a precarious affair for Mrs. Jeffery and her friends. To-day, old-age pensions are paid on a more adequate scale than the Poor Relief of my youth, and the Guardians augment them too with grants towards the rent. The recipients are "independent." The "half-crown and a loaf" have gone for ever. There are few things which I did at Wilton which gave me more pleasure at the time than the immense task of copying the Baptismal Registers, which was handed over to me by my father in 1908. In that year, old people of seventy received their first Old Age Pensions of five shillings a week. But they were first called upon to prove their ages, and for years after 1838, birth certificates did not exist. You could only prove that you had been born by proving that you had been baptised, and the unfortunate thing was that some of these old people found that they had not been christened till they were four or five years old. Their parents sometimes took them to church in batches. Though some of them could remember scampering round the Font on the day of the baptism, that did not count as evidence. Documentary proof was essential, and documentary proof meant the Parish Registers. This experience shook my faith in the relative value of written and of traditional evidence in all matters of history. Still, the Pensions authorities demanded copies of the Register ; and if some early nineteenth-century parents had been dilatory over the admission of their children to the Church, the Sins of the Fathers were now visited on the septuagenarian children, who were not seventy in the eyes of the law till seventy years after their belated entry into the Church.

For many years the Relieving Officer at Wilton was

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Mr. Wiles, a bustling little man with a kind heart and a sense of justice. He achieved the difficult combination of kindness to the poor with fairness to the ratepayers. He was entirely familiar with the resources of the families under his care, and he always knew when people could not live on the allowance granted them. Then he got more for them, either from the Guardians or from the Church. On the other hand, he was most severe on people who tried to throw dust in his eyes by making false statements, and he once said to me, about a very eccentric old woman :

“ Have you ever noticed anything peculiar about the shape of Patty’s chest ? ”

I modestly denied it.

“ I have then,” said Mr. Wiles. “ It’s my belief that she’s got a silver teapot in there. I know she had one once, and I don’t know what has become of it. Some day, I shall take hold of it and give it a shake.”

I don’t know whether he ever took this desperate step ; but if Patty really had a teapot in her bust, its shape must have been “ peculiar ” enough to give her away without any shaking.

Mr. Wiles could always be relied on to turn a blind eye if he chanced to pass the cottage of one of his old women at the moment when one of the ladies of the town was carrying in a chicken to be plucked, or a piece of needlework to be done. Anyone who thus earned a few pence to augment her weekly allowance of two shillings and elevenpence (without the loaf) was liable to have it withdrawn altogether ; but if Mr. Wiles knew nothing about it, of course he couldn’t report it to the Guardians. These august personages themselves would look over the head of Mrs. Jeffery when she happened to be mending a carpet in a house belonging to one of them ; for Guardians and Relieving Officers alike knew the difference made by the earning of those few forbidden pence.



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The lovely word Charity is out of favour to-day ; and the personal gifts which brightened the days I write of, are now looked back on as ugly symptoms of a state of society in which the rich alternately trampled upon, and patronised the poor. Yet the unhappy people in those days were those who lived in big towns out of reach of this simple and friendly giving and receiving. In little country places, these presents often passed between people whose circumstances were not actually very far apart ; and they carried with them a personal friendship which an Income-Tax return cannot convey. The columns of figures which fill our Rates and Taxes Demand Notes have taken the place of the basins which used to bring dinners from one house to another, and a great deal of flavour is lost in this exchange.

EDITH OLIVIER,

*Without Knowing Mr. Walkley* (1938)

## HIS FATHER'S FUNERAL

JOHNNY watched the cabs coming into the street, eager to pick up those who were going to his father's funeral ; red cabs with black linings, black cabs with yellow linings, green cabs with red linings, and blue cabs with brown linings. The first stopped near the house where his dead father lay, and the rest formed up behind, one after the other, stretching like a string down the street, waiting for the rush to come when the body would be carried out to be packed into the hearse which hadn't arrived yet. The drivers of the cabs dismounted from their seats and leaned against the walls of the houses in twos and threes, forming a grotesque, shaggy, lurching frieze on the face of the sun-mellowed, rain-stained bricks of the houses. A crowd of friends and neighbours had gathered near the door of the house, and waited, standing still and standing silent. There was a low

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murmur as the hearse, like a huge, black, decorated gothic casket, drawn by four black horses, each with a black plume on its head, came slowly trotting up the street in state, and sidled with dignity into a space right in front of the waiting cabs. The driver of the hearse and his assistant, wearing big, black, tall hats, and long, heavy, blue silver-buttoned coats, climbed quietly down from their high-up seats, and hovered about near the door, waiting for the call to come in and nail the coffin down.

A cab suddenly swept round the corner, came at a rapid trot up the street, pulled up in a line parallel with the hearse ; and the driver, jumping down, joined two other drivers, who stood smoking and leaning and talking together against the wall near the window of the house. The newcomer took off a hard bowler hat and wiped his forehead.

"The belly-band broke on the way," he said, "an' be the time I put a stitch of twine in it, I thought he'd be planted, an' all the prayers said."

One of the other two drivers took a pipe from his mouth, spat on the path in front of him, and answered, "Plenty of time, Jim—he hasn't been screwed down yet. Curious how long people take to say good-bye to a dead man."

"I'll give them another quarter of an hour," said the third driver, who wore a yellow muffler round his throat, "if some good Jesuit 'ud come along an' give me a joram o' malt to lower down into me belly—didderey didderum," he hummed.

"Me an' Jack," said the driver who had come in a hurry, "had a great night yesterday. Aftir dockin' t'animals, we opened with a couple o' pints in Dempsey's, then we had three more in the *Bunch o' Grapes*, slung another five into us in Henessey's, an' ended with the last o' three more in *The Royal Oak* as the shutthers were comin' down at the tick of eleven o'clock."

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The man wearing the yellow muffler rubbed his hands together, and envy glistened in his eye.

"Not a bad sackful for a man to get down him in the latther end of a night," he murmured—"didderey didderee didderum."

Johnny, standing by the heads of the hearse horses, saw the boy Connor, who went to school with him, standing beside his mother, watching him, and leering whenever he caught Johnny's eye. Johnny moved nearer to him so that Connor could get a better view of him standing cockily near the hearse horses, impatiently scraping the road with their feet and shaking the black plumes whenever they tossed their heads. Connor moved till he was just beside Johnny, though, sly enough, he held on to his mother's skirt, which he had stretched out as far as it could go. Johnny felt his head beside his shoulder, and heard him whisper in his ear, "Go an' put your hand on a horse if you're as brave as you're thryin' to look."

Johnny stiffened with pride and stroked the band of crisp crêpe on his arm as he saw kids in the crowd watching him and Connor. Stretching out a hand timorously, he stroked the haunch of the nearest horse. The animal gave a shuddering start, and kicked viciously, making the hearse shake and Johnny jump away from him in fright.

"Gaaaa, you mischeevous little brat," roared the driver wearing the yellow muffler, "gaaaa, out o' that, an' leave th' animal alone, or I'll go over an' kick the little backside off you!"

Johnny slunk away a little, and turned his back to Connor, so that his shamed and frightened face couldn't be seen.

"Fifteen pints between eight and eleven," said the driver wearing the bowler hat; "I wouldn't ask anything betther, even on the night of me first daughter's weddin'. We got home," he went on, "we got home, but it took

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two hours to do it, where it should ha' taken only twenty minutes : two solid hours o' mighty sthrivin', but we done it in the end."

"They ought to have the old man warmly folded up be this," said the man wearing the yellow muffler, "didderey didderey didderum."

"The both of us were rotto," went on the driver wearing the bowler hat, "the two of us strugglin' together, him helpin' me an' me helpin' him, whenever help was needed. We sung *The Heart Bowed Down* all the way home, fall an' up again, fall an' up again ; I'd call it a red-letther night, even afther a day of thinkin'."

"Last week was a rotten one with me," said the third driver ; "a few roll-an'-tea-for-lunch laddies, who are always lookin' for the return of their fare in the change."

Johnny felt Connor beside him again, and whispering at him over his shoulder.

"Mother says," he whispered, "that in a week or so you won't be so cocky."

"You're not comin', anyway," answered Johnny, "for I heard me mother saying that she hoped the Connors wouldn't thry to shove their noses in at the funeral."

"Yah," sneered Connor, "you're shapin'. Just because your father's dead you think you're big in your black suit, but me mother says it isn't new at all, but only dyed."

Johnny turned slantwise, looked at Connor in the eye, and murmured, "If it wasn't for me father bein' dead, I'd go round the lane with you, an' break your snot."

A woman came running to the door of the house, looked about her, saw Johnny, beckoned excitedly to him, and shouted, "You're to come in, Johnny, an' give your poor father a last kiss before he's screwed down."

Johnny stood still, shivered, and gaped at the woman standing in the doorway. He retreated a little, and caught hold of Mrs. Connor's skirt.

"I won't go," he said. "I don't want to go in."

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"Here, come in at once, sir," said the woman in the doorway, roughly, "an' pay the last respects to your father, who's in heaven now, an' watchin' down on all your doin's, an' listenin' to all your bold sayin's."

"I'll not go in," he repeated plaintively. "I'm afraid, an' I'll not go in."

"I wouldn't be afraid," Johnny heard Connor say, "to kiss me father, if he was dead, would I, mōther?"

"Don't be afraid, son," said Mrs. Connor, patting Johnny's head, "your father wouldn't do you any harm, an' when you're grown up, you'd be sorry you hadn't given him a last kiss."

"Come in, you little rut, when you're told," shouted the woman at the door, "an' don't be keepin' everyone waitin'."

She ran towards him, but he dodged her, and made off down the street, running full tilt into the man wearing the yellow muffler, trampling on his foot, and hitting his head into the man's belly.

"Jasus, me foot!" yelled the man, "you lightning-blooded little varmint, where the hell are you goin'!"

"He's the dead man's little boy," said the woman, getting hold of Johnny's arm, "an' he's wanted to give his dead father a last kiss before he's screwed down."

"An' he was makin' off," snarled the man, "an' knockin' the puff out o' people. A nice way of showin' his love for his father."

"Let me go, let me go," screamed Johnny, kicking viciously at the woman's legs, as she dragged him towards the house. "I won't go, I don't want to kiss him."

"Your mother'll have a handful in you when you grow up, me boy," she said, as she gathered him forcibly into the house in her arms.

She held him tightly in the midst of the crowd in the room waiting for the coffin to be screwed down. His mother turned round when he began to scream again, came over, and caught his hand in hers.

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"Let him down, let him down, Mrs. Saunders," she said to the woman. Then she bent down over him, putting her arm round his trembling body and kissing and kissing him, she murmured, "There, there, hush, nothing is going to happen to you."

He circled her with his arms, pressed his face into her skirts, and she felt his fingers cleaving through her skirt to the flesh of her thighs.

"I couldn't, I couldn't," he sobbed. "Don't ask me, mother, don't ask me to kiss him, I'm frightened to kiss a dead man."

He felt a gentle, sympathetic pressure of an arm around him, and softened his sobbing.

"No one'll ask you to do it," she said. "I'll kiss him good-bye for you myself. Just touch the side of the coffin with the tip of your finger."

She gently drew out his arm, and he shuddered deeply when he felt the tip of his finger touching the shiny cold side of the coffin.

"That's the brave little son," she murmured ; "and now I'll give your father a last kiss from his little boy."

She bent down and kissed the thing in the coffin, and he heard her say in a steady whisper, "Good-bye, my Michael ; my love goes with you, down to the grave, and up with you to God."

She stepped back, and he felt her body shaking. He looked up and saw her lips quivering in a curious way, as she said quietly to the waiting hearsemen, "You may put the lid down on top of him now."

The hearsemen stepped forward and lifted the coffin lid from where it was resting behind the coffin against the wall, silently and quickly fitted it on, and, with things they took from their pockets, began to turn the screws, filling the tense quietness with the harsh grinding sound of the screws tearing their way down through the hard oak of the coffin. When the screws had been driven home, the hearsemen went out and stood beside the

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hearse. Six men, two at the head, two at the feet and two in the middle, lifted the coffin up on their shoulders, and, in a curious body-bending way, carried the corpse, feet first, from his home to the hearse that waited outside to carry the body to the grave.

The man wearing the yellow muffler rubbed his hands gleefully together.

"We ought to be soon bowling along merrily to the boneyard, now," he murmured expectantly, "didderee didderay didderum."

The three of them suddenly caught sight of the end of the coffin appearing in the doorway. They took their hands out of their pockets, and went with a hurried, ambling run to the doors of their cabs, and sought their fares from the crowd that came pouring out after the coffin. There was a rapid noise of opening cab-doors, another rapid and sharper noise of the doors closing when the fares had climbed inside. The six men carrying the coffin, their arms locked over each other's shoulders, heads turned sideways to prevent the coffin edge from scraping their necks, walked slowly and rhythmically to the back of the hearse; the two leaders, stooping, rested their end of the coffin on rollers laid on the floor of the hearse, the middle couple bent down and slipped from under the coffin, the last couple pushed their end, and the revolving rollers carried the coffin into the hearse, and a hearseman closed the door.

Johnny was lifted into the mourning-coach by his mother, who followed after with his three brothers and sister, and they all settled themselves on the seat of the coach. The cab-drivers mounted to their seats, gathered their faded rugs of blue and green and red from the backs of the horses, folded them with a deft motion round their knees, sat down, took the reins in their hands, waited for the hearse and the mourning-coach to pull out into the centre of the street, and then with a "Yep, eh, yep, there," to the horses, followed one after the other,

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and went with an easy, ambling trot down the street, wheeling round the first turning, wheeling again at the next turning till they were back in the street they had first left, slowing down to a walk as they passed the dead man's door, and then away at a trot again towards the cemetery miles and miles away.

Johnny, hedged in between his sister and brothers, edged towards the window, but his sister pulled him back as he was trying to let the window down.

"Sit easy, can't you?" she said, "you can't go looking at things out of the window at your father's funeral! Keep quiet with those feet of yours, or you'll pull the dress off me."

"Let him come over here," said his mother, "and he can keep quiet and look out of the window at the same time."

His mother guided him beside her, so that with a little stretching of his neck he could see the world as it was passing by. They went slowly by the piece of waste ground at the end of the street where a huge Gospel tent was standing. He caught a glimpse of the long red scroll stretched over the entrance with the word Welcome in big letters on it. He thought of the night that he had timidly crept down and lifted the flap of the tent to have a squint at the crowd of faint figures filling the place, dimly shadowed out by the smoky light from many oil lamps. He remembered how he had struggled and shouted out, "Let me go, let me go, or I'll tell me mother," when a dark-bearded little man, with a pale face and cloudy eyes, had grasped him by the arm and had tried to pull him inside, saying in a curious, sneaky way, "Another loved and little lamb for Jesus."

Hearse, mourning-coach, cabs and cars threaded their way through the tenement-hedged streets where swarms of boys and girls played and fought in front of the gloomy houses that had once, his mother told him, sheltered all the great lords and ladies of the land.



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Round into Cavendish Row where the houses were high and still mighty, with stately doors and flashing windows. Outside of some of them maids, with black or blue dresses and white aprons and caps with floating streamers, were polishing brass plates, letter-box flaps and heavy knockers of bronze or brass.

"Dublin houses of the gentry when they come to town," said his mother.

"They have to die the same as all of us," said Ella, his sister. "Dust they were and dust they shall become."

"It would hardly be fair for God to let them live for ever," said his mother. "We're passing through Aungier Street, now," she added, glancing out of the window.

"Haven't we a long way to go still?" Johnny asked her anxiously.

"No," she said, "not a very long way now."

"But it'll take a long time to get there, won't it; a long, long time, really?"

"We'll get there all too quickly," she said softly.

"There'll be quite a crowd at the graveside," said Ella.

"The full-up of three carriages, twenty-six cabs and six side-cars," said Michael.

"The number that's attendin' the funeral show the respect everyone had for him," said Ella.

"An' yet he rarely spoke, and never mixed with any one," murmured the mother.

"It won't be very long till we begin to feel his loss," said Archie.

"We'll all only have to pull together, an' things'll be easy enough," said the sister.

"I'm the only one that'll miss him," said the mother, "me an' Johnny."

"We'll look after you both, never fear," said Ella, "so keep your pecker up."

"Steadily, shoulder to shoulder, steadily, blade by blade," added Tom.

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The coach stopped opposite the cemetery, they climbed out, and, in a moment, the pathway swarmed with the crowd that had emptied itself out of the cabs and off the side-cars. From a carriage that had immediately followed the mourning-coach a tall, thin, black-bearded clergyman stepped, and hastened on in front to the vestry, provided for the robing of the clergy by the cemetery authorities.

The hearse pulled in through the central gates on to the main path, which cut the cemetery into two huge sections. One of Johnny's brothers took some documents from his pocket and handed them to a fat, pompous-looking, little man, wearing a big tall hat and black gloves, and who had a face like a frozen image. The little man took the documents, examined the brass plate on the coffin to see that the body therein was related to the person docketed and scheduled in the papers. He nodded assent, and the coffin was placed on a low car covered with flowing black draperies, and pulled by a well-groomed, gentle-looking black horse, enveloped in a black gown heavily embroidered with silver, so that only the eyes, the ears and the feet of the animal were visible. A tall black plume rising from his forehead made him look like the nag that the Black Prince rode at the battle of Crécy. Overhead in a grey sky, spotted with timid-looking blue patches, dark heavy clouds were being tossed and pushed along by a northerly wind blowing steadily and reasonably, except that now and again it gathered strength and swept by fiercely, filling the cemetery with a mad rustle and a cold swish-swish from the bending branches of the trees as it went sweeping by. At intervals a sulky beam from a peevishly hiding sun would dart out from a corner of the sky, flooding patches of the graveyard with a jeering, flippant brightness, rippling and dancing slowly over the headstones and the floral flotsam that Christians scatter about a cemetery to make the place look as jaunty, as merry and as

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unconcerned as possible ; then, after flushing the place with a timid brightness, the sun would glide away, slip back into itself behind the clouds, and the dismal gloom that was slinking round would press forward and cover up everything again. Elegant beeches, ivy-trunked oaks, dark, well-tailored cypresses, looking like guardians keeping things in their proper places, and fan-branched yews, looking like shy, saintly, Georgian ladies dancing a quiet, secret minuet to themselves, were ranged along the avenues and paths. Tombstones, tall and squat, square and round, old, middle-aged and new, spread themselves everywhere, with an occasional lanky obelisk, like a tall boy peering over the shoulders of the others, seemed to gather closer together, stiffen, stretch, and stare and stare at the new-comer that had come to be planted, wondering who he was, whence he came, and whether what was coming would add to the dignity and ease of the dust that lay buried there.

Off the contingent started, the little fat man, with the tall hat and the face like a frozen image, leading in front of the bier, with the documents in his hand, directing the way to Section F, Plot B, Grave OX5432/2345, where the cargo of decaying flesh was to be stored against the day of the resurrection of the dead ; after the black-palled bier, pulled by the black-palled horse, came the mother and Ella, with Johnny walking between them, then, close up, the various relatives of the dead man ; and spreading out in a long procession behind, the friends of the family, silent and solemn-faced, marched up the main avenue towards the vestry where the clergyman stood, robed and ready to receive the body of his brother for committal to the clay. The silence was broken only by the soft fall to the ground of the horse's padded feet, the coo-cooo of a pigeon, the rustling of the leaves on the trees, or the cold swish-swish of the bending branches as a stronger wind went sweeping by.

The clergyman with the big black beard, wearing a

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white surplice and a black stole, holding a prayer-book in his hand, open at the Service for the Burial of the Dead, waited till the bier came close, then turned and marched by the side of the little fat man with the face like a frozen image, and recited in a loud and serious voice :—

“ I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever believeth in me shall never die.

“ We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the Name of the Lord.”

Coming to Section F, the cortège wheeled to the right, off the main avenue, and midway in a narrow path, a little to the left, they came to a heap of newly dug earth piled up beside an open grave. The coffin was lifted from the low black-palled car by four heavy-featured grave-diggers, who put ropes round it, and set it down by the side of the open grave. The black-bearded clergyman, walking carefully between the other graves so as not to step on one, slipped on a damp sod of grass, and was pitching into the grave, when one of the grave-diggers caught him, pulled him back, and set him on his feet again.

“ A narrow shave, sir,” he said, as the clergyman tried, with a hasty brush of his hand, to remove a hand-pattern of clay which the grave-digger’s grip had left on his white surplice.

Johnny saw the sudden look of fright ~~that~~ had crossed the face of the clergyman when he was slipping, and thought how funny it would have been had the clergyman fallen into the grave, and the fun they’d have had pulling him out again by his white surplice and his black stole. He giggled. His mother roughly pulled him by one arm and his sister by the other, and he was pushed behind them, red-faced with fear and shame. The looks

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on their faces told him that there would be nothing funny in a clergyman with a white surplice and a black stole falling into an open grave. The clergyman straightened himself up, opened the book again at the proper place, and began to read, as a pigeon coo-cooed, and the branches of the trees, bending, gave a cold swish-swish as a stronger breeze came sweeping by.

“Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower ; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.”

The grave-diggers lowered and lowered the coffin into the grave, and took the ropes from under it. One stood back a little distance, and the other stood near the edge of the grave, hatless, with a fistful of earth in his hand, waiting. The clergyman went on :—

“Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground ; earth to earth [the grave-digger threw some of the clay from his fist down on the coffin], ashes to ashes [more of the clay fell on to the coffin], dust to dust.”

The grave-digger threw what remained of the clay in his fist down on the coffin ; then he left the side of the grave and joined his comrade, the two of them throwing their eyes round, Johnny heard afterwards, to try to pick out the one that would be likely to give them a tip. The clergyman went on :—

“I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord : even so saith the Spirit ; for they rest from their labours.

Lord have mercy upon us.  
Christ have mercy upon us.”

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The grave-diggers hurried forward and rapidly began to shovel the pile of clay into the open grave in a strict and tense silence, again broken only by the pigeon's coo-cooo, and the cold swish-swish from the bending branches of the trees as a stronger breeze went sweeping by. Johnny looked up at his mother standing stiffly watching the grave-diggers filling the grave, and he saw that tears were streaming down her cheeks. He crept closer and closer to her, wrapped his right arm round her left one, squeezed and squeezed it, caught her hand in his and pressed and pressed and pressed it

The clergyman lingered, looking down at the clay falling on the coffin, his hands entwined in front of him, eager, possibly, for the thing to come to an end, sick of the dampness of the grass oozing through the thin soles of his boots, making his feet feel dead, dreading a cold to come, shivering a little whenever the trees gave a swish-swish as a stronger breeze went sweeping by ; thinking of the bright fire in his study at home, with life and warmth filling every corner, and tea, hot and richly brewed, poured into dainty cups, with his wife dividing life into two parts by talking of the things that belonged unto her home, and the things that belonged unto her husband's parish.

The grave was filling up now—the men were working rapidly—and in another few minutes they would be topping it, and he could quietly slip off, remembering the sudden rise in shares this morning that meant a gain of one hundred and thirty-five pounds and a few odd shillings, which wasn't too dusty when you came to think of it—at the evening service on Thursday he must remember to speak finally to the church charwoman about pawning the two hassocks that had been newly covered only a few days before—she might lay her hands on other things—only a few feet from the top now, feet numb and hands raw and nipped with the damp of the whole place, shivering and sodden with desire of decay

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and death and darkness and drooping—the shovels are tapping the top of it now—so good-bye for the present, dear sorrowful sister in Christ, and comfort, remember, is His to bestow, for your husband's in heaven and happier far than we can be here, who are seeking a city that's hidden away, and Sion's its name, shining forever with light everlasting, out-ageing the sun and the moon and the stars that gleam through the day and glitter at night, and never forget when God's city's in bloom, the sun and the stars and the moon will only be dust in the streets, frail dust in the streets of the city of God—so hurry your thoughts through your grief to the day when Christ on the clouds shall come sweeping again through the sky from His Father, and the dead that were bless'd by a union with Him shall come out of their graves and stand to attention, saluting their Lord, this when they have done, they'll seek out the loved one they've lost and the ones they have left sporting on in the flesh, and remember, unbroken unbent in the faith, you will gather your loved one yourself to your breast, to enjoy him forever fresh-robed in a glorified body, unsickened by thoughts of the past or thought for the future, for these shall be merged and forgot in the sun and the moon and the stars which shall only be dust in the streets in the city of God, and His mercy shall keep you till then ; so farewell for the present, dear sister in Christ, for the tea is at hand and the crumpets are ready and I must be vanishing now.

Heavily, for his feet felt puffed and softly numb with the damp that had oozed through the thin soles of his boots ; stiffly, because his joints had tightened with the cold, the clergyman picked his path through the graves, crossed the main avenue and dived into the vestry. As his mother lingered by the grave arranging the flowers that had been hastily placed there, Johnny saw him come out of the vestry, swinging a little leather case in his right hand, and hurry away till the trees hid him from view.

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Ella touched her mother's arm, and said, " You just come along now, Ma, and try to keep your pecker up " ; but her mother went on silently arranging the flowers on the grave, so Ella stole away to join her brothers strolling slowly along towards the main avenue.

For a long time Johnny waited and waited, till his mother turned away from the grave, and he saw that tears were streaming down her face. He crept up closer and closer to her as they slowly moved away, caught her hand in his and pressed and pressed and pressed it in a dead silence broken only by a pigeon's coo-cooo and the cold swish-swish of branches bending as a stronger breeze went sweeping by.

SEAN O'CASEY, *I Knock at the Door* (1939)

## COUNTRY MEMORIES

I HAVE always been glad that I am a woman instead of a man for several reasons, and one of them is because I think all things connected with a house are so intensely interesting. There are few things, to my mind, more fascinating than gathering in under one small roof the bits of furniture, the attractive fabrics, the books, the ornaments and oddments that please one's fancy and thus making one small corner of the world what one wishes it to be—or as near to that ideal as the purse permits. But poverty is no excuse for ugliness. It is not cost that calls the tune, but a sense of fitness, and the imagination to see possibilities in what may appear unpromising material. Everyone knows the room on which no expense has been spared, in which everything is of the best quality and in the best taste, and yet which remains nothing but an upholsterer's dream, lacking any sort of personality. And another room, which may contain nothing but a deal table and a Windsor chair with a blue cushion, yet be an abode in which one wants to linger.



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Apart altogether from what is in it, the proportions of a room have a great deal to do with the happy—or otherwise—effect of a room. That is one reason why the old cottage and farmhouse rooms are so often right while modern rooms are wrong—their proportions are adjusted to human values, the person is not dwarfed by his setting and in consequence made subtly uncomfortable. „There is more breadth than height—in contrast to those dreadful Victorian rooms which were often a great deal higher than they were wide, with something of the proportions of a colossal grave, so no wonder the unfortunate semi-corpses at the bottom had to distract their attention from their uncomfortable situation by a lot of pattern and upholstery. It is only when you get to the attics of tall Victorian town houses that you experience any sense of spiritual comfort. A house, unless it is built purely for show and entertainment, should give a sense of protection and enfolding from an often bleak outside world. That is why there should not be too many or too large windows—but that is a subject on which I have written before, and on which I have, in the modern phrase, a “complex”. I can imagine nothing more uncomfortable than living in a kind of conservatory, cold in winter—for cold it is to the heart, even if most efficiently centrally heated—and glaring in summer. The pity of it is that these outbursts of bad building fashion are not as ephemeral as last year’s hat, but remain to disfigure the patient earth as long as their steel and concrete lasts. But if they go out of favour they may go out of occupation, and the minute a house is not lived in it begins to decay—it is as though a thousand invisible imps began to work their mischief, with the tiniest touches at first. The gloss leaves the paint, then it begins to peel, the wood underneath is exposed and starts to shrink and warp, letting in the damp, a tile or two is loosened from the roof, a window-pane is shattered, insects and mice gnaw at the floor boards, a trail of ivy forces its way between

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the brickwork and slowly begins pulling down what was built up with those soft but irresistible vegetable fingers—the growing, living world that is not man, has got into that house, and in time that house will be no more a habitation.

These are natural and inevitable processes of decay, and therefore give us no sense of horror—only regret if the house has been a good house, and satisfaction if the landscape is happier without it. But in that marvellous story of his called *All Hallows*, Mr. Walter de la Mare has diffused a most subtle sense of horror by reversing the natural process, and showing how the decaying cathedral was being invisibly built up by some evil influence. Like all the best ghost stories it is slight and suggestive and not explained, but it grips the imagination.

When the restoration is done by human hands, the structure brought back to use and beauty, there is a special satisfaction about it. Chaos has been banished, and order and seemliness have returned. Things are once more in their proper places. If it were not for the content that order gives to housekeeping and housework, it would be rather a weighty burden. But because of order, even that most disliked of household tasks, washing-up, has its pleasures—the rows of shining cups and dishes in the kitchen dresser, instead of the messy disorder of the sink. There are many little pleasures in life which are barely recognised, which never receive their due. Surely that is one of them?

Such homely matters as washing-up bring to mind the old country people whose lives were so closely linked with homely and enduring things. It is very strange to us nowadays to realise that less than a hundred years ago the majority of country people spent their lives in the place in which they were born. Their rural employments lay to their hands, and in the course of a long life they went no further abroad than where their feet would carry them. The Heathfield man who quarrelled with

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his wife and to show his displeasure went away to Ditchling, less than a score of miles distant, found he could not stand it for long, and when he came home again, said, "I've had quite enough of furrin parts—nothin' like old England, surely," was typical of his rooted generation.

But this deep-rootedness grew character, and a kind of patience and dignity, and often a slow humour which is rarely to be seen nowadays. The isolated village became, perforce, a kind of large family. Like the family gathered under one roof, it might quarrel and display uncharitableness, but it had a sense of unity and wholeness which no modern floating population can possess. In a sense it had kept something of the entity of the manorial system where each man, though he were but a serf, had his customary rights as well as labours, had a place in the rural economy, however humble it might be. He belonged. The tragedy of these days is that so many men belong nowhere—neither in the mind nor the body have they a home.

Books written in praise of the country life about the middle of last century are apt to have a sententious air about them, and occasionally raise a smile, especially in their commendation of a "contented peasantry," for we know a little more nowadays of the hardships endured under those picturesque but leaking thatched roofs. Nevertheless, these books have charm. In a little old Sussex one I possess, called *Burghersh, or the Pleasures of a Country Life*, there are many engaging passages. In one of them the author says, "By application to agriculture the manners of the peasant are formed to simplicity, and his temper is subdued together with the ground; for no occupation implants so speedy and so effectual a love of peace as a country life, where there remains, indeed, courage and bravery sufficient to defend his property, but the temptations to injustice and avarice are removed."

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The succeeding paragraph will cause a somewhat wry smile : " The husbandman, who affects only an equality, knows the earth will supply his wants, and he is attached to her all-nourishing bosom. By daily renewing his labour, he gains the noblest conquest over nature, and contributes more than any other to the splendour, prosperity, and life of the state, by producing the principal objects of necessity, *of which he consumes but little himself*" (I cannot resist emphasising this marvellous sentence !) " and so fulfils the designs of the wise Author of Nature, who has ordained that all beings should be useful to one another ; and as an additional benefit, he gives to his country his own children for hardy and tractable soldiers."

The comfortable classes in Queen Victoria's middle years were very comfortable, not only in body and estate, but also in mind. No wonder they praised such a meek and useful peasantry.

A reading of the history of the English peasant will show how remarkably true is that statement, " of which he consumes but little himself." To understand this it is not needful to delve in obscure documents—a few back numbers of that admirable quarterly *The Countryman* will provide plenty of evidence. The surprising amount of information, its variety and character, that is stored away in those nice, fat, green volumes of *The Countryman* gives me continued joy. There is not such another publication in existence. Also from the offices of *The Countryman* at Idbury are occasionally issued other publications, one of which I have in my mind at this moment. It is called *Glimpses of Rural Life in Sussex During the Last Hundred Years*, and is by Alice Catharine Day. Its frontispiece is a photograph, taken in 1878 on their diamond wedding-day, of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Sands, and he was born in 1794 and she was born in 1793. He wears one of those iron-grey linen Sussex smocks, and she a three-cornered crotched shawl, a garment

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which I continually saw round the shoulders of an old Sussex friend of mine, and that close black bonnet with frilling all round the face, which used to be the old cottage woman's most decent and becoming headgear. Mrs. Sands said of her family, "Well, Ma'am, I brought up ten children and paid the penny a week for their schooling for about two years each. I never sent a girl to service before she was ten years old, could read her book, write a letter, figure out a washing bill and make a chimmee, and I never had one disgrace me."

That is a pretty good record and I myself knew an old Sussex woman who could say the same of fourteen children—she had borne sixteen children, but two died. How those large families were clothed and fed and shod (a big item in the rural budget, as the rough lanes and muddy fields are terribly hard on footwear) must remain something of a mystery. But the old people, as they look backwards into the past and its hardships, are generally cheerful about it all.

One of the old countrymen in *Glimpses of Rural Life* says: "One particular thing that I remember when I was young was the happiness all round us. We children were happy and so were the older folk. Certainly we had not much money. I used to think as much of a farthing or a halfpenny to spend at Mrs. Piper's as folk do now of a shilling, and we had no grand food in those days. Plenty of skim milk and vegetables, home-made bread and pork were our everyday food. Of course we had cheese and sometimes butter. But the thing was the way in which neighbours were ready to help one another, not only with nursing during sickness, but in all manner of friendly ways. Though wages were sometimes only eleven shillings per week, yet with our many privileges we were happier than folks are at the present time. A carter had a cottage free, besides two hundred faggots. Oh! what fires the old roots made which belonged to the man who went wood-cutting, and had the roots he

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grubbed out, besides the brush which he cut away in preparing the hop-poles."

An old woman born in 1845 said the same : " Nowadays folk do not neighbour in that way, and I do not think they are as happy as we were."

In all these little records of rural lives the cottager's garden and pig play an important part, and the gleaning or leasing of corn after the harvest, ground at the mill, and the flour baked in batches of loaves once a week in the brick oven, heated with faggots. I have seen bread baked in that fashion, and the smell and taste of the loaves is incomparable. One woman says that she never "starved" her family on baker's bread. And the wretched paper-white, tasteless stuff produced by too many bakers is starvation in all the essentials of the staff of life. That yellow corn in the fields, heavy-headed with its own goodness, was never meant to make such a travesty of bread as that.

A very usual method of cooking with cottagers was to hang the vegetables and meat in nets inside the iron cauldron over the fire. Cauldrons were also used as ovens for baking cakes and other things, either inverted with the ashes heaped round, or standing upon the hearth with the top closed in with an iron lid.

Miss Day, in this little book which is so full of merit, gives many instances of farm labourers and working men in the Hadlow Down district of Sussex, who by their own efforts, hard work and integrity, managed to acquire small farms and become prosperous in a frugal way. It is a fine record and full of human dignity, as it was all done without "financial backing"—considered so indispensable nowadays—and achieved solely by a pair of skilled and industrious hands, a stout heart and firm self-denial. Such life stories raise one's opinion of human nature—which is always the impression made upon me whenever I come in contact with the true countryman or woman.

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In this little book there is a good deal about the use of oxen on the land. One of the men speaks in this way of them : " Master kept four teams of oxen and we used them to plough and harrow the fields and to prepare the hop-gardens and do the carting. I liked working with them better than with horses, and I will tell you for why. Maybe on level ground the horses are quicker, but if you have a bit of a hill oxen always keep up the same pace. They do not get out of breath like horses and have to stop now and then going up hill in order to breathe. I was trusted to drive a team of oxen to Lewes market. They were our young team five years old, and well broken. They fetched fifty-one pounds. They went uphill as fast as down."

It is one of the mysteries of farming why plough-oxen have gone so utterly out of use. All farming is not mechanised, even in these days, one is thankful to say—the horse team is still one of the pleasant sights of the countryside. The few remaining people who have worked with oxen have nothing but praise for them. They are docile, strong and steady. They are better at a dead pull uphill (a consideration to the Downland farmer) than horses ; the pulverising screwing tread of their small cloven hooves is good for the land ; their harness—practically nothing save the wooden ox-yoke and chain, is cheaper than that of horses ; they do not need grooming ; they are cheaper to feed, requiring nothing but straw and hay for the winter half of the year.

But the ox-team is gone, and the ox-yoke is now a treasure for the museum.

I will steal two more little bits from *Glimpses of Rural Life*, one touching, and one funny. There were three old men going to Hadlow Down church : " Obadiah Cottingham leading blind Hezekiah Stapley, followed by George Fuller on his wooden leg, were rather a pathetic sight, as Sunday after Sunday they tramped along and then sat together in one of the front benches.

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They were none of them scholars, but Hezekiah said to me, 'I love to hear the clergyman's verses in the Psalms; they give me much to muse on during the week.' "

A labourer's wife who was in poor health, had bought herself a bonnet, and felt that this was a matter calling for excuse. "You see, Ma'am," she said, "perhaps you think me extravagant in having bought myself a bonnet, but you see, mine was quite worn out, and so Polly—that is my eldest daughter, you know—Polly, she is always so considerate like; says she, 'Mother, buy a black one, and then you see, Mother, if you die, it will be ready for me to wear at your funeral.' "

Another quaint thing must be quoted here, as it is too good to lose. It is not from Miss Day's book, but from an advertisement in the *Morning Post* of March 13, 1788: "G. Watts respectfully acquaints the Public that he has prepared a large variety of machines of a portable and durable kind with Promethean fire, paper and match enclosed, most admirably calculated to prevent those disagreeable sensations which frequently arise in the dreary hours of midnight from the sudden alarm of thieves, fire, or sickness, as by procuring an instantaneous light the worst calamities and depredations might often be prevented in families."

Certainly the drawbacks to flint and tinder in the midnight hour of emergency must have been many—though that does not detract from the delight we take in reading Gilbert White's description of rush-making. Those ways are gone, and largely gone, alas, are the people made by the discipline of such ways. Day by day they slip quietly to their graves—most of my old friends of that sort are departed—the essential, untouched type of countryman and countrywoman. They were the salt of the earth.

The Burial Service tells us in plain words that we came out of the earth and that we go back to the earth. Sometimes one might be inclined to think that is the only



occasion when an urbanised, pavement-bound, machine-made population gets any glimpse of fundamental realities—those realities with which the farm labourer is in daily contact. Call him Hobsman—he has had many names—he is the one essential human figure when all the shows and shadows of glory are gone. He is seen, under sun and rain, immense and processional—processional through the seasons and the centuries, through generations of human lives, engaged in the same unending, elementary and requiting toil. The tilling and sowing of the earth is the first step man makes from pastoral savagery. First comes the hunter and the driver of flocks, who ravages and does not replenish the soil, the wanderer, who eats as he moves, leaving barrenness behind him. Then there follows him the first man with his rude plough who obtains increase, and does not move beyond the circle of his ploughing, but there makes his hope and his homestead. His enduring fields are the beginning of civilisation and communal life. The Hobsman of Domesday was not so much an individual as a unit in a joint and necessitous agricultural existence, where each man leaned on his neighbour's shoulder, and ploughed and sowed and reaped by aid of his neighbour's ox and arm. Without each other the lord of the manor and the churl upon it could not have carried on existence—one gave the land, the implements, seed-corn, livestock, protection ; the other gave that without which those things were worthless—the labour-service by day and by year.

From a condition closely resembling serfdom—with certain compensations and “customary” rights—Hobsman slowly rose to the more established condition of becoming a copyholder, and his services were gradually and slowly commuted for rent. The ravages of the Black Death, which slew so remorselessly as to make the countryside almost a desert, helped to break up the manorial system, and made land cheaper, while labour

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became more valuable. The arable returned to grass, because there were so few to plough and reap. England became a sheep-walk. Hobsman, who had been primarily the ploughman, now turned shepherd, and watched the flocks that nibbled where once corn had sprung. But always, in each generation and through all vicissitudes, he stayed close to the land which bred him, and slowly gathered into his mind that deep inherited knowledge of earth and wind and weather signs, of drought and great rains, of growing things, and the ways of animals in sickness and health, of seed-time and harvest in the endless circling of the years. Through prosperity and disaster of murrain and blight, from serfdom to yeoman farmer, Hobsman lived on. At times he seems little more than animated clay, little wiser than his ox—at times he is seen as type of the eternal and elemental man who knows and lives by the secret of the fruitful earth.

I see Hobsman in every arable field of ancient farm-lands. I see him in various guises, but whether his garb be that of Norman times or the Wars of the Roses, or the Commonwealth, it is subdued by mud and rain and use to a certain earthy similarity. I see him tramping homeward to his evening meal along the narrow footpath through the standing corn. He is weary and heavy-footed, it has been a long and a hard day—the sun that sends its last low rays upon his homeward path, had risen young and dewy upon his outgoing, and many a long hour of work in the field has he put in between the rising and the setting sun. But as he raises his eyes from the yellowing wheat some sense of the wonder of it all goes through him with a sudden shock—the seed he has sown, the first green blade he had watched, that now stood tall and rustling at his thigh. And for season after season, for year after year since he was not so high as the ripening grain, he had known it and grown it, or helped to do so—the corn that was bread, the corn that was bread and breath and

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sinews and life to a man. And in the next field were the cows, quietly pulling late mouthfuls of grass—they were all part of it, too, part of the unceasing round and linking of rural life, for “No cattle, no dung ; no dung, no corn.”

Homely, simple, eternal.

How small seem the little kings and conquerors who shout and strut upon the scene, when set against that background of rural life—the plough weaving back and forth across the fields, like a shuttle of destiny ; the quiet cows chewing the cud in the shade ; the ducks turning upside-down in the pond ; the hens clucking and scratching with hopeful industry ; the cock proclaiming from the dunghill that the world is his.

Dynasties go down in ruin—such scenes remain.

ESTHER MEYNELL, *A Woman Talking* (1940)

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MARTLEMAS week began on 24th November, and all hired servants—men and maids—left their places and had a week’s holiday until 1st December, when they either “stayed on” with the same master or got hired at the Statutes Fair to go to a fresh place. As I had got engaged without going to the “Stattis !” as we called it, I trudged up to Hill-Top Farm on 1st December with a green tin box on my shoulder, which pressed hard on my neck before I had done staggering up the steep hill.

It was not my wardrobe that weighed so heavily in my box ; my wardrobe consisted of one grey knickerbocker suit for Sundays, two clean shirts and collars, two pairs of stockings, and a pair of Sunday boots. The weight came from a number of books, mostly school prizes, which I fondly imagined I was going to read in my spare time. I reckoned wrong as usual, for I never opened a

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book until the following Martlemas. I can well remember that first night, leaving my home, the striving and scheming ; the skimping a bit here and a bit there that had gone on for weeks so that I might go out into the world clean and respectable, with a complete change of linen. I was not yet fourteen, and I remember that bit of a swagger, which was mostly "put on," as I said good-bye to mother and sisters before shouldering my box and setting off to seek my fortune. I was still pretty well steeped in "book heroes," which must be my excuse for thinking that fame and fortune were to be won at Hill-Top.

The farm wasn't a bad "living-place," there being plenty to eat. The trouble was I hadn't enough time to eat in. The missus had said she "wanted a lad to live-in for to do the odd jobs." She kept no maid, saying she "wouldna be pested wi' sich frauchless wenches as ther' is nowadays," and preferred doing all the housework herself. Which was a fallacy, for that was where my odd jobs came in. From morning to night she kept me on the run doing odd jobs, so that during meal-times I was running in and out like a dog in a fair.

The kitchen where we had our meals was a big, square place, with a stone-flagged floor scrubbed and scoured till it shone cold and bare as charity. A big, solid-looking table stood in the centre, and here George and the missus had their meals, my seat being at the side-table near the door, which was handier for the odd jobs. A stone slab with a pump stood near the window overlooking the flagged courtyard. Opposite the window was a wide fireplace with shining cooking-range, in front of which was a solitary hearthrug, the only bit of covering on that wide expanse of flags. There George, the missus, and Laddie the sheep-dog warmed their toes ; but never the toes of the hired lad. On one side of the fireplace hung a long-handled copper warming-pan, and on the other side stood a bright copper kettle, neither of which

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were ever used, and, by the way they shone, might never have been used. Two brass candlesticks stood on the chimney-piece and a pair of brass snuffers hung under a cake merchant's almanack in the centre. In one corner stood a grandfather clock with a spray of roses painted across its dial. Several rows of hams and flitches, and a double-barrelled gun, hung from the ceiling, and that was the furnishing of that great kitchen, where everything was scrubbed and scoured and uncomfortable.

We got up at five o'clock every morning, excepting Sunday, when we laid in an hour longer. I cleaned out the stable while George fed and watered the horses. Then I went to the cowshed and milked four cows—dairying was only a sideline in those days, beef and barley being the main products—and took the milk into the house on the stroke of six. Breakfast was at six prompt. If I went in at three minutes past, the missus would say : “Tha wants ta sharpen thi sen up in a mornin’; ’ere tha’s bin an hour a-milkin’ four cows, an’ corves awaiting for their parridge.”

I learned to have my breakfast with one eye on that calf-porridge. I had fat boiled bacon, with a basin of milk, for breakfast, and had never got very far into it before the missus would jerk the calf-porridge off the fire, saying : “’Ere, ma lad, just nip w’ this afore it gets cow’d. Ye can finish ateing when ye come back.”

We reared about half a dozen calves—the biggest ones having a “calf meal-porridge” in place of new milk—so I nipped and fed the calves. Sometimes, when I wanted to get back to my breakfast, or I hadn’t got a good start beforehand, I spilled some of the porridge in the straw to speed the process ; but even that didn’t always “save my bacon”—or perhaps it did—for the missus would meet me in the doorway with the coal-scuttle, saying : “’Ere y’are, jist fill this while ye’r on ye’r feet !” And in this free-and-easy way I got my breakfast.

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It was unfortunate for me that she should be so punctual, for so soon as ever I started eating again, George would rise to go, and as we "bridled-out" at six-thirty—daylight permitting—the missus would indulge in sarcastic comments on my "sittin' gorgin' aw' day." So I learned to "gollop" my food.

After breakfast I helped the cowman to feed the stock, staggering along under heavy skeps of meal and turnips to some dozen fat bullocks. I was too small to keep out of the muck, and waded through slop and cow-muck until I became absolutely lost. My breeches became so caked in pig-swill, calf-porridge and meal I believe they could have stood upright without me inside them. My hands, by the same process, aided by the raw winds, became so swollen and cracked it was purgatory to wash them. And often I didn't. There was no one interested in whether I washed them or not, and so I degenerated into a "reg'lar grub-etten little yarker," who cried and grinned, trying to force stiff, hard boots over broken chilblains. I must have looked unkempt and forlorn, but I was perfectly happy. I was too busy to be otherwise, and I always maintain that to be perfectly happy a person should get busy and interested in something.

I made friends with every animal on the farm, and, being young and eager, I used to spend an undue amount of energy making them comfortable and contented, when I might have been taking it easy.

After helping the cowman in the yards, I usually went carting turnips with old Short. I was very proud of old Short, and rode him to the field, sitting sideways on his broad back, to the tune of *Rosie O'Grady* or *Irish Molly O*. I was always glad to get into the fields, because—though I liked feeding the beasts—there was the missus's eye peeping at me over the window-curtain as I ran about in the cow-yards, and even when there wasn't any eye to be seen, I always felt it was there somewhere. So I whistled and sang while I filled my cart with turnips and enjoyed

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the friendship of old Short and Laddie the collie, who always came and threw himself down—when the cart stopped—immediately in front of Short's nose, to the old horse's extreme annoyance.

We went in to dinner at twelve-thirty prompt. The missus was always to the minute with everything—excepting my half-crown, which I will mention later. We had boiled beef for dinner, with vegetables and the never-changing Yorkshire pudding ; boiled beef is more economical than roast, and what that lady didn't know about economy wasn't worth learning. I had a little tin mug of ale at dinner, and for a lad who was a staunch teetotaller I got it down very nicely. But, gosh ! wasn't it cold swallowing it in winter, fresh drawn from the cellar. George used to say : " It's a poor belly that can't warm its own beer."

I generally managed to sit for half an hour over dinner, and then off I had to go chopping kindling, riddling cinders, carrying straw for bedding-down at night, carrying hay into the " fotherham," filling the chop-bin for the horses, and then, in my spare time, hunt the eggs up. There was no bonus on them now, and—even in the short days of winter—I believe I earned my keep, plus two and six.

We "bridled-out" at one-thirty, getting back to the stable again—when days were longer—at five-thirty. I again milked the four cows, and again I took the milk into the house on the stroke of six. I then had a basin of tea—not over strong—with more fat bacon and plenty of home-made bread and butter. There was plenty of food—good and wholesome—but it never varied until Sunday afternoon, when we had jam or pastry for tea. Only a hungry farm lad could have stuck that regularity—boiled bacon, boiled beef, Yorkshire pudding, boiled bacon, and milk. I looked forward to tea-time on Sunday with the eagerness of a child for its Saturday ha'penny.

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After tea I fed the calves again, and, to my credit, never spilled the porridge in the straw at night-time. But it's a messy job feeding calves ; the little beggars will come fussing round, sucking at your clothes with porridgy mouths, and that is how my clothes came to be so stuck up. After seeing to the calves I helped George in the stable spending no end of time a-curry-combing and brushing of Short, learning to " rig-plait " his tail—like the wagoner chaps did for showing—but he never appreciated my efforts to make him look smart, but went on munching his oats as though I didn't exist.

We spent most of our night in the stable until nine o'clock, when we had a basin of bread-and-milk, and so to bed. Sometimes other farm lads dropped in for an hour, and other times we walked across to their stables—there being two more farms near to ours. Usually one of them would bring a melodeon, and he was considered a poor gawk who couldn't knock a tune out of a mouth-organ or give a song to pass away the evening. We had rare times in the " fotherham," seated on the corn-bin or on a truss of hay. Tom fra' Bennett's would strike off with, " Oh, never go into a sentry-box, to be wrapt in a soldier's cloak," while someone played away on the melodeon. He was a merry sort of lad, was Tom, and his songs always had a spicy flavour. Harry Bates, Farmer Wood's man, always sang sentimental ballads. Harry was a Lincolnshire chap, and their singing, I always noticed, was of a more serious vein than the rollicking Yorkies. His favourite song started with—

" A preacher in a village church, one Sunday morning  
said,

Our organist is ill to-day, will someone play in-  
stead ? "

and he would sit on the corn-bin singing as long as you'd a mind to listen. He knew no end of good songs—as did most of the farm lads—but his were mostly about



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"soldiers sighing for their native land," and "heart-broken lovers," and that sort of stuff, so that as a rule we liked to get Tom singing first. They were all good singers, and good musicians too, and it must not be supposed, because they were farm men and lads, they were just caterwauling. Another diversion, when not singing, was playing dominoes, draughts or fox-and-geese on the lid of the corn-bin, or seated on the floor with a stable-lantern beside us.

Everyone at all the three farms went to bed at nine—though the other two farms allowed their lads until ten on Saturdays—and though it may seem a ridiculous hour to be going to roost, when a man had to be in the fields from six-thirty in the morning he was ready for bed at night. I enjoyed these musical evenings singing old English songs ; but alas for the fly in the ointment, if I offered to oblige with *Hearts of Oak*, or some well-known school song, the missus's voice would come from the kitchen door, "George ! George ! en yer owt for 'im to do a minute ? " and I should be sent to do another odd job.

When we tired of singing, we told tales ; at least, the men did—folk-lore tales—whilst I sat with my ears open, and probably my mouth, taking it all in. If Tom told the story, it was all about Yorkshire giants and queer characters who were on friendly terms with the devil ; of Lindum Hall (probably Lindholme), where was a barn full of white sparrows ; and of a farmer who thought nothing of throwing a plough over his shoulder and carrying it to the field, to save the trouble of hanging on the horse. Of the wonderful feats of strength and enormous appetites of these Yorkshire giants. Of Jimmy Hurst, of Rawcliffe, Doncaster, who went hunting on a bull and wore a hat measuring three yards round the brim. But what I remember best about Jimmy was the ingenious way in which he stopped the sow from lifting the pigsty door off its hinges. He nailed a scythe blade on the bottom of the door.

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Strange as they seem, most of these stories were founded on fact, and when Tom finished with his giants, Harry would tell stories of witches. He was a "Lincy," and his county seemed noted for witches and boggarts. One old witch could turn herself into a hare, and—according to Harry—one day a farmer set his dogs after a hare, which ran into the old witch's cottage. The farmer followed and went into the cottage to claim the hare, but all he saw was the old witch bathing her thigh, which was covered with fresh blood and teeth-marks in exactly the same spot where the dogs had bitten the hare. I'm sure we all believed these tales, as we sat on trusses of hay or on the corn-bin in the "fotherham," in the dim light of a stable-lantern. Everyone looked very serious and credulous, and if anyone had expressed a doubt about the truth of them, the whole company would have verified the truth by saying, "I've heered my dad tell of 'im mony a time," or "My grandfeyther ewsed to work on t'varry same plaice!" Indeed it was impossible to doubt; there were so many people who knew these people or "knew people who knew these people." It made a great impression on me, especially the witches and boggarts. Whenever I had to go along the dark lane down to the village I thought of them. The conclusion I came to was that Yorkshire was a land of giants and blue-devils, Lincolnshire was overrun with witches and boggarts, and for proper sensible men one must go into Nottinghamshire. For which reason they were called "Nottingham Lambs."

Some nights we went sparrow-catching with a riddle fastened to a long hay-fork. We held the riddle on the sides of the stacks or on the ivy where the sparrows roosted on the house-side. I am pleased to say we never found any "white" sparrows, so evidently we had no "dealings wi' owd Harry" in our part of the world.

I seldom got down to the village at night, but sometimes I was sent down to get a plough-coulter "laid,"

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and I always found one or two of my old schoolmates there, on a like errand. The blacksmith was a bit of a politician, and we used to listen with admiration to his political opinions without ever understanding a thing of which he spoke—but wiser folks than us still listen with the same effect. There were always a few lads—and loafers—to be found in the blacksmith's shop at night. "A rainy day for shoeing horses and a frosty night for plough-coulters," would have been a good maxim for the blacksmith, because of the fact that farmers always sent their horses to be shod on a wet day and plough-coulters always needed sharpening when the ground was hard.

One thing I remember very well about my first winter was "Plough Monday," though I was considered too much of a youngster to join in with them; which was as well, for it seemed to me nothing but an ale-guzzling affair. Plough Monday—as perhaps you know—falls on the first Monday in Epiphany, and marks the end of the Christmas festivities, when the plough is supposed to start fallowing down for the winter. Well, that winter everyone was forrard wi' the ploughing, having had an open back-end, and I believe it was Tom fra' Bennett's who conceived the idea of reviving Plough Monday. It was a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance, and was, even at that time, dying out. But Tom was a regular Yorkshire dale-man, always ready for a spree of any sort. So a lot of them made "one yoke" on Plough Monday, that is, working until two o'clock instead of coming home for dinner and "yoking out" again, and spent the afternoon cleaning up a plough and decorating it with caddis and rosettes.

After tea they dragged the plough round the village, singing at all the big houses and such as were likely to give them ale money. They did very well at it, too, for the plough was left in the yard at the *Black Swan* for several days, as none of the party were capable of trailing

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it home again for several nights. They had a particular song for this occasion, the last two lines of each verse ending with—

“ We’ve ploughed a fair acre, I swear and I vow,  
We’re all jolly fellows that follow the plough ! ”

And they were jolly, too ; though anyone trailing a plough on the highway nowadays would be locked up, and serve them right, too.

When the snow came we used to go sleighing down the mill field, which had a steep run of several hundred yards. It was jolly fun whizzing down to the bottom, and having to roll off into the snow because the track had frozen so hard we couldn’t pull up without plunging into the stream. All the village turned out to sleigh, or to watch others go speeding down the slope, for the older folk, whose sleighing days were over, couldn’t resist the pleasure of watching lads and lasses all in a mix-up, floundering in the deep snow at the bottom of the track. And didn’t the girls enjoy it too, half a dozen lads and girls riding on a sleigh that was only meant to hold three, laughing and squealing, while the stars twinkled over the fir trees, and the mill dam crinkled and chinked as the frost gripped tighter and tighter on its over-flush. No doubt many village romances started on the sleigh track, but I was too young then to bother about such daftness.

The snow lasted more than a week on this occasion, and I enjoyed a bit of ease in the day-time. When it snowed, I sawed logs under the cart-shed, and when the snow stopped coming down we all set in to manure-leading, getting all the yards cleaned out before the snow had gone. Then we just dodged about, seeing to the cattle, and even my odd jobs came to a standstill.

After the snow had gone I had to go ploughing the turnip ground, where the sheep had been feeding. I took Flower and Short, and felt mightily important at being trusted with the young mare. I had nothing to

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feel conceited about, however, for the spell of bad weather had made my hands more cracked than ever, while the raw thaw wind turned them blue with cold. My overcoat was tied round with string in place of buttons, an important part of my breeches had worn through with riding on old Short's rough cart-saddle, while a trellis-work of binder-twine did service for buckles on my leggings. I was still a "bit or a yarker," not much higher than the plough-ails, and two women coming along the lane stopped to look as I turned on the headland. They watched me struggling to ease the plough into position, and, as they turned to go, I heard one of them remark : " Aye ! He's som'dy's poor bairn ! "

I felt a bit nettled, and more than a bit ashamed of my appearance, while the importance of being allowed to drive the young mare completely vanished. I had become a little ragamuffin, and knew if I presented myself at home in that state I should cop it. The reason they never knew was because I never went home except on Sunday night, when I was respectable ; though I kept my hands out of sight as much as possible and spent a torturous time trying to get them clean before I went.

Why I seldom went to the village or home on Saturday was this : in the first place, Saturday was as long and busy as any other day in winter-time, and didn't allow of much time off, but the main reason was my half-crown per week. The missus had agreed to pay me every Saturday night, and for several weeks I went home with my half-crown. Then she began to have no change and deferred payment until " next week," till it became a regular thing, and ended in one-sided arguments on how many weeks were due before I could have a draw.

I would mention it to Harry, the cowman, first, as we sat eating our " forenoon drinkings " after feeding the cattle. I would say to him, " She hasn't paid me again this week ! " and Harry would say, " She's a — bargas ! " and kid me to " stick up for thi sen," and

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"don't thee be shoved off." Thus encouraged I screwed up enough courage when Saturday night came to ask : "Have you any change this week, please? I should like to walk down home to-night."

"I'll see what change I've gotten. How much does ta want?"

"It's five weeks now, I think."

"Five wicks! Yar young blaggard, I'll gie ye five wicks, comin' 'ere wi' a tale like that!" and she would glare at me, with her tall bony figure towering over me like a hawk over a sparrow.

But I stuck up to her, maintaining my "five weeks," while according to her reckoning it was "only three," and in the end she would split the difference, so that I generally got diddled out of half a crown in the course of five or six weeks. She was a rare old bird, to be sure.

Now, when I heard those two women talk pityingly about my appearance, I felt nettled about it, and ashamed, for I had always been brought up to be clean and tidy, and my only excuse is I was only a nipper and hadn't bothered. So that night, while George saw to the horses, I sat in the "fotherham" with my breeches over my knees, gathering up the fragments—it was a blessing we had no visitors that night. I made poor progress, for it's an awkward job handling a needle with cracked hands, and when bedtime came I decided to carry on upstairs. The missus decided differently, and just as I was sliding upstairs she called me back, saying : "Let me look at them 'ands!"

I showed her my hands, and she, taking me by the scruff, marched me up to the sink, saying : "Nay tha doesna, tha doesna gan 'tween my sheets wi' pawts like them!" and she made me wash and scrub them while I was ready to howl with pain.

Then she poured glycerine over them, and, lending me a pair of old gloves so as not to grease the sheets, said : "Theer! git!" So I "got." Next morning I found

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my clothes neatly mended, and my hands nearly better. I wondered, after, if those women had called on her. I never let my hands get bad again, and Harry advised me to dry them with "fine sharps" after dabbling about with pig swill, so life got more pleasant on the axiom "A stitch in time—"

On Friday mornings I took a load of corn to be ground at the mill, bringing the load back I had taken on the previous Friday. It was interesting to watch the miller starting-up the big waterwheel, with its "thump, thump" as the water came pouring into the buckets, and the big stones turning slowly round as they ground our corn into meal. Watermills are now out of date, most farmers having a petrol engine and a mill of their own, and, though they don't grind as good as the stones did, it no doubt saves a deal of time, while the miller cannot now be charged with having diddled them.

The miller was generally suspected of having pinched a few pounds of meal from each sack, it being the custom to deduct so many pounds from a sack of grain as being "lost in the stones." Whether it was all lost or not, the miller's horse and cattle were always sleeker and fatter than anyone's, though he grew no corn of his own.

One thing the old lady was queer about was her pigs, and someone had to sit-up and watch whenever a sow was farrowing. I remember going in to supper one night, and the missus saying: "T'old sow's a bit unasy to-night. When ye've had yer bit o' supper yer can sit wi'er a while."

So she gave me a stool to sit on, promising to take me off in an hour's time if the event hadn't come off. It was warm and stuffy in the loose-box where the sow was lying-in, and, having nothing to look at but a big, hefty black-and-white sow, I soon nodded off. I was awakened by a smart clap across the ear, and, being but half awake, the place seemed full of little pigs, and there stood the missus, carrying on something alarming

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because I had neglected my work. I was feeling sleepy and cross, and picked up the stool as though to throw it at someone ; perhaps I might have done, but just then the sow gave an angry " woof " and hustled us outside. I was never asked to sit up at a sow's lying-in again.

On Sunday morning we got up at six and had breakfast at seven. It was still " fat boiled " the same as other days, though we often had coffee in place of milk. After feeding all the animals and seeing that everything was made comfortable, we walked round the fields until noon.

Every Sunday morning a group of farm chaps could be seen examining each other's ploughing, for ploughing was a fine art in those days, and the plough lads took great pride in showing off their best. It was the introduction of American diggers that killed their interest, for ploughing has no glory when done by a digger plough. Lots of good ploughmen refused to get hired to a place where diggers were used, and so drifted to town work, not because of higher pay, but because they could no longer put heart or art into their work. Digger ploughs and Dutch barns—in their earlier days—drove as many good men off the land as did lower wages.

And so we spent our Sunday mornings criticising each other's work, though George seldom went off our own farm. We used to walk round with the gun, and Laddie following on behind. Sometimes a stoat or a weasel would run in the plantation hedge, and Laddie would get busy trying to get him out of the briars, presently to come scampering after us on three legs, and his coat stuck-up with burdocks. While I was taking the thorn out of his foot, he would lick my face and whine and then scamper off for fresh adventure. What I liked best about our fields was the wide view ; being on top of a steep hill, you could see—from the " far Brecks "—into Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, woods and squares of fields lying right away until they became lost in the mistiness



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of space. Our fields, too, had a wide and rugged sort of loveliness about them. The land was thin and craggy, and, I suppose, required thin and craggy folk to make a living out of it. The rock was limestone, and in places showed through the soil, like the bare bones of a mammoth skeleton. These knolls and patches were left unploughed, and short stunted thorns and whins had taken root in the crevices ; so that, while it hadn't the luxuriant beauty of the lower parkland, it had a more natural beauty of its own.

I mustn't forget one important piece of business which took place on Sunday morning. None of these little villages possessed a barber's shop—heads were too few for a barber to make a living out of them—so hair-cutting was a spare-time occupation, reserved for Sunday morning. The shepherd was chief barber, though often a coachman or groom would set-up with horse clippers. John Henry was the most popular barber in our village, and he was a shepherd. His backyard was strewn with human hair on warm Sunday mornings ; on cold or wet days the hair fell on Mrs. John Henry's kitchen floor. You had your choice, too, "Shears or scissors ?" for he cut equally well with either ; but denounced "these 'ere 'orse clippers ; don't make no sort of a job of it ; they seam it and sear it !" he would say, and in his opinion there was nothing to beat a pair of long-pointed sheep-shears for the "nick o' the neck" and "back o' the years." Whenever I called I was always careful to say, "Scissors, please !" for I didn't like the look of his long-pointed shears.

I spent Sunday afternoon—along with the other lads—catching sparrows, or rat-hunting, or digesting the week's news in the local paper, sitting in some stable or saddle room. Maybe some lad would have a copy of the *Police News*—a terrible paper it was—or the *Red Letter*, or *Ally Sloper*. So we got sensation, entertainment or jollification ; but never a line of good reading, for which I

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longed. I was too timid to bring my school prizes out for the other lads to jeer at, for I knew Lady Brassey, Captain Marryat, Charles Lever or my book of poetry would be considered "rammel," and probably they would get roughly handled in my present company. So I shut myself out of the world of books and hunted rats. It was only in winter that we spent Sunday afternoon loafing around the buildings ; in summer we went birds'-nesting, raiding orchards or nutting. It just depended on the time of year. Some of the lads were the fortunate owners of cycles, going long rides for the day.

We had tea at five o'clock on Sundays, which I always looked forward to on account of the jam. This was a welcome change to a lad of fourteen after six days of bacon and milk. After tea I went to church or chapel ; I liked chapel best because it "loosed" half an hour earlier than did church. Sometimes I spent the evening by our fire at home. Most farm lads passed Sunday evening at the street corner, while the wagoners and seconders were to be found in the *Black Swan* or the *Jug and Glass*. Had I lived farther from home I might have followed their course, but mother insisted on my going to church, for which I am now truly thankful.

I couldn't help contrasting our cheerful fire and cosy kitchen, with its threadbare carpet and the dresser loaded with books and ornaments, against the big, cheerless farm kitchen, where no one seemed at ease except Laddie, who occupied most of the hearthrug as his just dues. But I never let-on about it, and told the little ones how well I was doing, and what a fine horse was Old Short ; and mother would smile and say : "Aye ! it's all very well having a fine horse, but she doesn't seem in a hurry with that back-money."

One Sunday night I had a pleasant surprise. It was the time of year when nights put out, with spring not far behind. We were in a clothing-club, run by the school-mistress, and when I called in home there was a pair of

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breeches and a pair of leggings waiting for me. The club had paid out. It seems a trifling matter to write about now, but for a lad getting half a crown a week it was an event of great importance. Mother said : " I've made a ' put ' to get you these all winter, for I'm sure those you're wearing must be threadbare by now ! "

Poor mother ! If she'd seen 'em, wouldn't she have carried on, and me brought up respectable. So I just gave her a hug and said, " They were about done for ! " and felt mightily proud, because now I could be neatly dressed in corduroy breeches and leggings and stride it out like a full-blown wagoner.

FRED KITCHEN, *Brother to the Ox* (1941)

## LIFE IN A HOSPITAL WARD

WOMEN were not meant to live *en masse*—except in harems. They inflate the importance of their own little centre of activity until it eclipses the rest of the world. Men manage to pigeon-hole their life : work, domesticity, romance, relaxation, but a woman's life is usually as untidy as her desk. She either fails ever to concentrate on one thing at a time, or else fills one pigeon-hole so full that it overflows into the others.

I don't know whether the nurses at Redwood were typical of the whole profession, but most of them had no interest in anything that happened a yard outside the iron railings. They never read a paper, except the *Nursing Times*, and only turned on the Common Room wireless when the nine o'clock news was safely over. They were only interested in the war as far as it affected them personally—shortage of Dettol and cotton-wool, perhaps, or jam for tea only once a week.

The ward beds had earphones fitted to them, connected with a central receiving set, and while I was dusting lockers, I used to inquire about the seven o'clock news.

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"Why d'you always ask if there's any news?" a patient asked me one morning.

"Well, I don't know—because I'm interested, I suppose."

"Funny," she said, "I shouldn't have thought a nurse would be interested." That summed up the attitude of the outside world towards nurses and of nurses to the outside world. Nurse Donavon once asked me—I remember the day well; it was a red letter one, because she had washed her hair—"Whatever were you talking to Sister Mason about at dinner?"

"Oh, the war," I said vaguely. "Settling world politics."

"Good gracious," she said, "hadn't you got anything better to talk about than that?" I asked her what she would talk about when a German officer swaggered through the glass doors to take over the ward.

"I'd ask him if he'd had his bowels open," she said, and laughed coarsely.

Although they were so wrapped up in the hospital, some of the nurses grumbled incessantly. "I hate it," they would say. "I hate the uniform, I hate the patients, I hate the Sisters, and Fanny Churchman is a mean old witch."

"But you like the work, don't you?"

"Loathe it. Sick people disgust me and operations are boring once you get over feeling faint."

"Why ever be a nurse then?" one asked innocently. The nurse would stare. "Well, what else could I possibly be?"

I should have thought almost anything rather than something so distasteful. They could have left; it was only a question of a month's notice and the Matron's odium. They can't have disliked it so much. In the same way, they grumbled about the food, while packing away mouthful after mouthful.

I asked a lot of them what originally made them take

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up nursing. Sometimes it was that they had been ill and had a very good nurse at an impressionable age. They rushed into hospital as soon as they were old enough, without seeing anything of the world or having any of the fun that is due to extreme youth. Naturally the restricted life irked them. They would have done far better to have seen a bit of life first and settled down in hospital afterwards if they had not yet worked the urge out of their system.

The war, of course, sends a lot of girls into hospital, but in normal times, apart from hero-worship and a semi-religious call, they go because nursing is about the only profession which you can enter entirely unqualified and not only get your training free but be paid while you are training. I never can see that nurses are so underpaid in the probationer stage. Besides their training, they get their keep, uniform and all medical treatment for nothing. I agree that the wages of a fully-trained nurse are iniquitous ; their skill and experience, acquired after three years of comparative slavery, should entitle them to more pay than a high-class parlour-maid.

I say all this now, rather smugly, but at the time, of course, I grumbled as much as anyone and disparaged the contents of my monthly envelope. Redwood was not a hub of entertainment but one can spend money anywhere. Apart from things like stamps and cigarettes and stockings, whose life was not lengthened by crawling about dusting bed wheels, there was always food. When the stomach wearied of a diet excessive, as *Sister Fairchild* would say, in carbohydrates and deficient in vitamins C and D, we used to live for a while on coffee and buns and snacks and whatever we could afford. At the beginning of the month we used to go to the Blue Lady Café and Biddle's Restaurant and the tea-room above Hooper's, the only department shop in the town—all places where you got a table-cloth and a couple of flowers in a vase and a reasonable amount of currants in the cakes and

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tea per pot, not per cup. By the end of the month, we would be sneaking out after dark to "Fried Fish, Wet or Dry, Chips 2d., Newspapers Urgently Required," or to "Jack's Box" and "Jack's Snacks," where the sand-cake was really made of sand and the coffee came syrupy out of a bottle, but the beans and sausages were heaven at ninepence a go. We never went to the *Rowan Arms*—why, there was a set price for dinner there and two ancient waiters and an idiot boy in tailcoats, not our style at all. There was a cosy bar, though, upstairs and along the passage past the engravings of the various stages of Queen Victoria's coronation; and, as the barmaid had once been a patient on William Forrest, it made a good excuse for Parry and me to call in there occasionally with coats over our uniforms. She and I had got as far as Christian names—definitely not done at the hospital, however great a friendship. Her name was Chris. I liked her a lot and wondered why I had felt an aversion to her at first. Envy, I suppose, because she seemed so at home. She told me that she had hated me, too, and thought I looked sour and conceited. There had recently been a fruity scandal at the hospital, just before I came unfortunately, and now everyone was on the look-out for people to be "queer." One night the guns round the near-by aerodrome were very noisy, and I went into Chris's room for company. What with this and the Christian names, we were quite a bit of gossip until Nurse Grainger provided a fresh subject by running off and marrying Nurse Larkin's fiancé, an unappetising man called Gander who had had half his stomach removed on Herbert Waterlow Ward.

Just about this time I was feeling quite pleased with life. I had got an amusing friend to work with, and had found one or two others who were good for a laugh; I was no longer the most junior on the ward; there was a pathetic, half-drowned little thing called Weeks, who never spoke above a whisper and who knew no better

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than to ask me what to do ; I was beginning to learn my way about the work of the ward, and had picked up one or two of the basic rules of nursing. My complacency was doomed to shock, however.

One evening the Senior Staff Nurse, the fat girl who had initiated us on our first evening, summoned me to her room. The basin was still choked up with tea-leaves, and her smalls were drying on hangers, festooned round the top of the cupboard.

"Just a hint, old thing." She was fearfully matey, as matey as her sister, whose photograph rollicked at me from the dressing-table. "You won't make yourself popular here by being too friendly with the seniors. It isn't done, you know, really." She undid her belt, and the studs popped gratefully.

"D'you mean Nurse Parry?" I was staggered.

"Oh, come on, I didn't mean anything personal," she said, red in the face, as she struggled with her apron straps. "Just a hint."

"Who may I be friendly with, then?"

She released the strain from one overworked safety-pin. "Well, your own set." The other safety-pin relaxed and her apron bib fell forward, exhausted.

"Oh, my own set. People like Gunter."

"Yes, old thing." She could breathe more easily now. "When you're as junior as you are, it's better to stick among the juniors." I noticed that her mother and father were laughing at me from sagging deck-chairs on the window-sill. She had undone her collar, and as there seemed nothing more to say, I thought I had better go before she started on the buttons of her dress.

When I had got over my amazement, I looked forward to telling Chris about it. She had gone out with an airman that night, but I would see her on the ward in the morning. We would make beds together, and I would tell her then. While we were doing poor old Mrs. Morey, perhaps, who had morphia every four hours to sweeten

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the dregs of her life and thought that Chris and I were Snow White and Tinkerbell.

I had forgotten that it was the first of the month. I could have cried when Night Sister read out the Change List : “. . . Nurse Dickens to go to Herbert Waterlow.” It looked like fate. Gunter leaned across the table to say : “ I’m not changed. You’re on my ward.”

I returned her widespread smile with a sickly one, and slumped down to the Men’s Surgical Ward in a furious temper, prepared to hate all the Surgical Men. I thought that I had been changed because I was Too Familiar with the Seniors. How petty these women were ! All right, I thought—ten times as petty myself, but one’s sense of values is groggy at that hour of the morning—all right, I won’t try. Sister had the day off, and Nurse Sowerby, the Staff Nurse, was a feeble creature with swollen ankles, whom everyone called Sow. I slopped through what work I could not avoid, snapping at the men and not attempting to learn their names or ailments. Gunter was always underfoot and the other nurses seemed a deadly lot. The First Nurse, a raw-boned, ginger Scotch girl called Ross, said : “ None of your dirty William Forrest ways on this ward,” before I had even started, and I knew we were enemies. She had long yellow teeth and red wrists.

The day seemed endless, because I was clock-watching all the time, and at half-past five I dropped what I was doing, excused myself abruptly to Nurse Sowerby and rushed off the ward, only to be recalled half-way down the corridor by Nurse Ross, to come back and wring out the sheet I had left in the sink.

“ I said, none of your dirty William Forrest ways,” she said. “ You dare to treat Sister Martin as I’ve no doubt you treated Sister Lewis.” I bent over the sheet with tears of rage burning my eyes. I prayed that she would give a man the wrong medicine and be publicly disgraced.



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The next day was my day off, and when I got out into the great world things clicked back into proportion and I saw how wee I had been and how dangerously far on the road to becoming one of those whose limitations so irked me. Thank heaven for these days off, and for the sanity of a long sleep. I returned to Herbert Waterlow prepared to like it, and soon discovered that I was on the best ward in the hospital, with the most lovable patients. I had to work like a black to counteract the bad impression I had made on the first day.

There was always something going on on this ward. As well as operation cases, we received all the casualties—the car smashes, the drunks, the would-be suicides and the accidents from all the factories within twenty miles. It was quite exciting going on duty in the morning, because hardly a night went by without an admittance, and you might find anything from another perforated gastric ulcer, propped wanly upright with a saline transfusion dripping into the vein of his arm, to an unconscious man with two black eyes in something that was just recognisable as a face.

Scottie was one of these—a brawny giant with red hair ramping all over his chin and chest. He had been embroiled with a lorry on the way home from *The Running Horse*. He lay for two weeks like a happy baby, taking the nourishment that was fed to him and giving an occasional prehistoric grunt, but otherwise completely insensible. His tough little wife used to visit him every day and talk to him in the hope of waking him. Sometimes she would bring the baby and shake it under his nose, but he would just stare with empty blue eyes. Once, when I was pouring some Guinness down his throat, he smiled at me and winked, and I ran for Sister, thinking he was coming round at last. When we got back to him he was more deeply unconscious than ever, possibly due to the stout, and she delivered me a short lecture on the strict observation of symptoms. I should

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like to be able to record that it was his wife and baby that at last pierced the Lethe of Scottie's brain, and that he opened his arms and cried "Wee Jeanie!" but what actually happened was that he suddenly grabbed Gunter's skirt as she was passing by, and said: "Hullo, darling, it's a dark night for a nice wee lassie like you to be out by herself."

There was plenty of work on that ward. We always had a few more patients than we could comfortably manage. More came in, and we still managed somehow. You never got off duty to time, but you didn't mind, because what kept you was real nursing—something more than going over and over the same bit of brass with a duster. Working hard with people creates a bond, and I grew to find something in common with all the nurses—Sowerby, with her air of an overworked charwoman; Ross, who was deadly efficient; little Robins, the new Pro, who used to giggle and slap the men; Howes, whose apron and deportment were always spotless; even old Gunter, who continued to be as indigestible as the puddings that were our daily diet now that winter was drawing on.

I had not been long on the ward before I realised that it was Sister Martin who was responsible for the unusual atmosphere of willingness. She had the knack of getting work out of people without goading them, and of making them feel that they were co-operating in a united effort instead of being pawns without initiative. She was a rare specimen.

She had the energy of the small, wiry person, and shot about from bed to bed like those cash holders on wires in old-fashioned drapers' shops. Each patient was in the nature of a personal challenge to herself. If anyone could save a man's life, Fanny Martin could—even the nurses admitted that. I have seen her miss all her off duty for five days, staying on the ward from eight in the morning until after ten at night, nursing a man who you would

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have thought was the core of her heart. When he died, she ran off and changed her apron, and was back again to see about rallying old Hoskins, who had been shrugged over hopelessly by the House Surgeon. She didn't think much of House Surgeons. She chivvied them all over the ward, and when at last they escaped, making, perhaps, for their dinner, she would run after them and drag them back to see a patient they had missed. She accorded a certain amount of deference to the Honorary Surgeons, but she was almost the only Sister who didn't either toady to them, or bridle, or hero-worship and probably make up long stories in bed about them. She treated them as equals, and if she thought they were wrong she said so, and they liked her. I once saw that eminent surgeon, Mr. Harvey Watkins, pinch her in the doorway of the Specimen Room, after she had worsted him in some argument. I looked at her with new eyes, and saw that she was quite young enough to be pinched. She might be quite pretty if she would only stand still long enough for you to see.

Chris's airman had asked her to bring a couple of friends to a concert at the aerodrome. She asked me to go, and Barnett, the baby-faced girl who had found me my room on that first evening. At first I said I would not go. I was always too tired these days to do more than a few minutes' homework for Sister Tutor, soak in a bath with the morning paper I had got from one of the men on the ward, and fall gasping into bed. Chris drew me terrifying pictures of myself in a rut, cutting myself off from the outside world through mental inertia, and ending up with social paralysis, a stammer and a twitching face when publicly addressed. I allowed myself to be persuaded, and began to look forward to it. It was ages since I had been out anywhere, and I had to spend all my off duty on the day of the concert trying to make up for the neglect of my nails and hair. Of course, the

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ward was busier than ever that day : two emergency cases for operation and a casualty admitted who never recovered consciousness before he died. As the evening wore on, I kept looking at the clock as I scurried about, knowing that I would never be finished by half-past eight, and ready to be picked up in the airman's tiny Austin at nine.

By an immense effort I was ready to go at a quarter to nine. I was dropping with fatigue, and would have given anything not to be going out. I kept thinking of my bed. On my way to Sister, old Hoskins called me. I pretended not to hear, but a smug man in the next bed sang out : " Hoskins wants you, Nurse ! " By the time I had attended to the old man, who fussed and fidgeted and couldn't be made comfortable, it was nearly nine.

" Please, Sister, may I——" I began.

" Nearly finished, Nurse ? " she said. " You've done that poliomyelitis boy's leg, haven't you ? "

I had forgotten all about it. " Just going to do it now," I said, cursing inwardly, and dragged myself off to the back-breaking task of re-bandaging a couple of legs to splints, firmly and thoroughly so that the little devil couldn't kick them off.

By the time I was changed, Chris had been in and out of my room six times and had eventually gone out to appease the impatient Arthur, who wanted to go without me rather than be late for the concert. I rushed out, feeling a mess, piled into the back of the car on top of Barney, who said : " Look out for my coiff ! " and we rattled off down the dark hill towards the aerodrome.

Arthur had provided two exuberant friends called Tom and Nigger, for Barney and me. We seemed to have a lot of drinks quickly, and I was surprised that I could ever have felt tired. That must have been some other evening. The hospital seemed very far away, and I told Chris that she was right ; I should do this sort of thing more often.

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"Shut up," she said, "there's a man singing." So there was. We were all sitting on rows of benches in a hangar, and a huge man in uniform was standing on a platform with a Union Jack behind him, his eyes tight shut and his fists clenched, singing *There'll Always be a Nengland* as if it were being pumped out of him. After him, there was a Sergeant-Pilot who tap-danced, and then a quartette harmonised interminably and nasally. They were evidently popular, because the audience stamped their feet and whistled and would not let them go until they had given a rendering of *Dinah*, cribbed from a record of the Mills Brothers. There was a conjurer, and a small thin boy who recited, and then it was the interval and we had more drink and sausage rolls. I missed the rest of the concert, as the one who was called Nigger, because he had tight curly black hair, insisted that I would like to see his aeroplane, which was standing all by itself in the farthest corner of a very damp field.

I enjoyed my evening tremendously. The thought of six o'clock in the morning left me unruffled. Barney and I slept on each other all the way home, and I woke with a start from a beautiful dream to hear Arthur saying : "Are you getting out, you two ? This is as far as we go." He had stopped in a side street just before the hospital, and we fell out only half awake. It was bitterly cold and the stars were scattered prodigally on a black velvet sky, but I was too concerned with getting to my bed to notice the beauty of the night. The main gates were open, but we had to creep round the edge of the gravel to get to the little back courtyard and the convenient bathroom window.

"My God," whispered Chris, "the night nurses are busy." Two ambulances were drawn up outside the main door and another turned in at the gates after us, its head-lamp painting an arc on the gravel as it swung round.

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"I bet they're going to Herb Waterlow," I said. "I wonder what it is. There hasn't been a raid or anything."

We could see shadowy figures and the humped shapes of stretchers, touched here and there by the red glow from a tail-lamp. Muttering voices and exhortations came across the gravel, but it all seemed remote from us, like a scene in a play. We crept on, falling over things, giggling and shivering, found our window and pushed it up cautiously, to avoid its treacherous squeak. I heard a hollow clang as Chris reached the bath, and then we heard her: "What on earth— Here, come on in, quick, there's something up. Don't make a row." I climbed sleepily in after Barney and sat on the edge of the bath to put on my shoes again. I didn't care what was up so long as I could get to bed. I didn't realise at first that all the blue lights in the passage were on, that people were running up and down and calling out, that the place was alive, in fact, at two o'clock in the morning, when it should have been dead in sleep.

I thought I had better go to my room before I was seen, but as I turned into my corridor, someone grabbed my arm. It was Nurse Ross, half in and half out of her uniform dress.

"There you are!" she said breathlessly. "You've got to get into uniform and go on the ward."

"What?" I must be dreaming.

"Hurry, now!"

"What's happened?" But she was gone already. The door of Robins's room was open and I looked in. "Rob, what on earth's happened?"

"Don't you know?" She looked at me with enormous eyes, as she pinned the straps of her apron behind. "There's been the most frightful explosion at one of the factories. Everyone on the men's wards has got to go on. There's twenty burn cases coming, they say."

How I got myself to my room and into my uniform, I don't know. I was almost crying with tiredness and my

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head throbbed like a machine. Through half-shut eyes I saw my reflection in the mirror, grey and old, more like a patient than a nurse. I hardly had the strength to raise my arms long enough to fix my cap. No satin couch could have looked more tempting than my ugly, long-legged bed, with its jumble of cases and shoes underneath. I kept my eyes averted from it while I pinned on a dirty apron—I couldn't be bothered to look for a 'clean one—and stumbled out of the room, wondering how I was ever going to keep awake long enough to be any use.

The ward was in chaos. All the lights were on, and every patient awake and goggling. The two night nurses were dashing about aloofly, half resenting the day nurses' intrusion, half thankful for help in a situation with which, they told themselves, they could somehow have coped alone. Extra beds were being put up at the far end of the ward, and patients who were well enough were being moved into these so as to leave ten empty beds at the top of the ward. Four of the casualties were in already, and a stretcher was waiting on the floor in the passage. Sister was on her knees beside it. "Quickly, Nurse," she said, without looking up as I passed her, "bring me the hypodermic tray—and the Adrenalin." But when I got back she was standing up, just going back into the ward. "I'm afraid it's too late," she said, with a grim little smile. There were already three screens round one of the beds in the ward. I knew what that meant. Nurse Sowerby came out from behind them. Her mouth was quivering and she was on the verge of panic. "Oh, Sister, they should never have brought them on to the ward," she gabbled. "They're bringing in dead men, that's all. Whatever shall we do?—oh, look—there's another stretcher and no bed ready. Oh, Sister, what shall we do . . .?" Her hair was in wild wisps and her cap askew.

"Pull yourself together, Nurse, for heaven's sake," said Sister sharply. "You'll have to go back to bed if

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you can't control yourself." Poor old Sow gasped and wavered, and eventually saved herself on the rock of Sister's astringent calm. She spent the rest of the time being elaborately composed, doing everything with maddening deliberation and telling people to keep calm who had no intention of doing anything else. Some of the burns were not serious, others were a nightmare. They nearly all had to go up to the Theatre to be dressed and treated, and the blinds were going up on a slanting winter sun before we were anything like straight. Two more of the men died before morning. It must have been a terrific explosion. People were talking about sabotage, but it was never proved.

As far as possible, Sister gave us a man each to attend to, while she herself dashed about from bed to bed, just in time wherever she was wanted.

"Get this man into bed," she told me, as another stretcher loomed in the doorway. "That bed there. Get him ready for the Theatre; they'll all go up as quickly as they can be taken. I'll come and see him in a—Mr. Briant! Here a minute!" She grabbed at the House Surgeon's white coat.

"They want me on Secker Ward," he said.

"They can go on wanting," she snapped, and dragged him behind a screen.

Between us, the porters and I got my man on to the bed and heaped blankets on him. I was terrified. I had never seen a bad burn case before and I hardly dared to touch him. I looked round, but everybody was busy. It was up to me to look after him, and I suddenly felt proud and excited. This one shouldn't die. He was unconscious, but breathing, his face waxy and an ominous blue shadow round his nose and lips. I could just feel his pulse. His face was untouched and his eyes seemed all right, but it was his body. . . . I couldn't undress him; his overalls were burnt into his skin in places. I cut them away as well as I could. He was quite young,



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With a fine straight nose and curly mouth and brown, soft, boy's hair.

Sister came up to give him an injection. "More blankets, Nurse," she said, "and hot bottles if you can find any. He's terribly shocked." There was only one bottle in the cupboard, but I snatched another out of Robins's hand, cursed her as she grabbed at it, and I believe I hit her before I rushed off with it, leaving her twittering with rage. Mr. Briant was examining my man sketchily when I got back. "None of them are fit to go to Theatre," he muttered, "but I daren't leave them." His long chin was dark with a stubble of beard and his eyes bloodshot. I remembered that the night nurse on Maternity had told me he had been up all the night before with a Caesarean. "Get him up as soon as you can," he said. "He's got a chance."

I saw Nurse Howes coming into the ward at one end of the Theatre trolley. She looked as neat and spotless as ever, her madonna face unruffled. As soon as she had got her man into bed, I grabbed the porter.

"Here, this one's next, come on."

"Sister said that chap over there," he said stolidly.

"No, no—she meant this one. Really, she told me."

I dragged him unwillingly over to the bed. There was no one free to help us, but between us we managed to get him on to the trolley. In the lift, he suddenly opened his eyes and moaned.

"Hullo," I said.

"Lo," he said, and closed his eyes and moaned again, complainingly, pouting like a hurt child.

In the anaesthetic room there was another trolley waiting, with a nurse from another ward. "How many have you got?" she asked.

"Ten," I said. "At least, ten came in. How many have you?"

"Six. Secker have got some, too. Where's yours burnt?"

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"Body."

"Face and eyes, mine." She sighed. "Gosh, I'm tired, aren't you?"

I remembered with a shock that two hours ago I had been on the point of death. I didn't feel a bit tired now; there hadn't been time. Surely it couldn't have been only two hours ago. I could hardly remember it, it seemed so far away.

The sliding doors opened and one of the Theatre nurses came through. I caught a glimpse of the usually speckless and orderly Theatre. Chaos was an understatement.

"Hullo," said the nurse, as she took hold of the other trolley. It was Barney.

"How d'you feel?" I said.

"Terrif. What a night!" She grinned, and they went into the Theatre, and the doors slid to behind them.

The youngest and newest of the House Surgeons came in, swinging his stethoscope and looking as nonchalant as a Harley Street surgeon.

"Is this chap identified yet, Nurse?"

I shook my head.

"Some of the relations are here. There's a woman outside who hasn't found her husband yet. I think she'd better have a look at him before he goes under." He called through the door behind him: "Come in, Mrs. — er . . ." She came in, a little brown-eyed fieldmouse, who was going to have a baby, clutching her handbag in front of her and tiptoeing. She took one look and sucked in her breath, nodding and looking from one to the other of us. "Jack," she said shyly, and touched his face. "I'nt 'e cold?"

"He'll be all right," said the doctor, with over-loud assurance. "You tell Nurse his name and all that, and then you'd better go and wait downstairs."

"Roper's the name," she whispered.

"Right you are," he said. "You tell Nurse. I've

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got to go an'——" He escaped, still swinging his stethoscope, determinedly jaunty.

I found a bit of paper and put down the particulars she gave me, to fill in later on his chart. She answered me earnestly, anxious to do the right thing, awed by the hospital. She kept touching him wonderingly, as if unable to believe that this was really the man who should just about now be calling her name as he stamped into the house, home from the night shift.

"The doctor said he'd be all right——" she whispered, as if to reassure herself.

"Yes, I'm sure he will. You'd better go and wait downstairs now, Mrs. Roper. We'll look after him."

"Yes," she said, touching him once more before she went out of the door. "But i'nt 'e cold . . . i'nt 'e terrible cold?"

Barney came in soon, and we wheeled him into the littered Theatre. Mr. Sickert, the Resident Surgical Officer, was sitting in a corner, in his sterile cap and gown and mask, with his gloved hands clasped in front of him, like a good little boy. When we had got Roper on to the table, the anaesthetist clapped down the rubber mask. "I'll only give him a whiff of gas," he said.

Just enough to keep him under. His condition's pretty poor."

Mr. Sickert got up wearily. "Better cut down for an intravenous up here, I suppose. Why wasn't it done on the ward, Nurse?"

"Well," I mumbled through my mask, "I don't know really, sir. It's such a muddle down there——" I had said the wrong thing.

"Muddle, muddle, muddle—it's always the same. Expose his leg, Nurse—come on, hurry up. What it would be like here in a bad air-raid, God only knows." He grumbled away to himself as he began to cut down to the vein.

I went into the sluice to find the stand for the saline

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bottles. I could hardly get in for the piles of towels and gowns and dirty swabs overflowing from the sinks and bins. Through the far door I could see them operating in the other Theatre. A nurse came out with a bucket of dirty towels, and I asked her where the stand was.

"Don't ask me," she said, as she emptied the bucket despairingly on to one of the heaps. "I'm either going or gone mad."

They finished with Jack Roper at last. The saline had improved his pulse slightly, but his colour was still earthly. His arms and body were dark purple where they had coated him with Gentian Violet. It was already hardening into a sheeny skin like the tight-fitting costume of an acrobat.

I had to leave him when we got back to the ward, because there was so much sluicing and clearing-up to do outside. I felt fiercely possessive about him and hated to take my eye from him or let anyone else touch him in spite of their knowledge compared to my ignorance.

In the sluices I flopped. Robins was flopping there, too, and we cried with exhaustion over a pile of sheets. I discovered that I was aching all over and I could do nothing but yawn and yawn.

Sister came out while we were coping half-heartedly. "You can leave this lot for the moment," she said. "Dump it all in the bath, if you like. You can go off now and have a bath. There'll be breakfast at six, and you'll have to come back on the ward for a little, I'm afraid, but I'll let you all off in shifts during the day to sleep."

There was porridge for breakfast, and sausages and bacon, and cups and cups of glorious coffee. Coming out of the dining-room, we met the other day nurses coming in for the ordinary breakfast. They were aliens—people who had slept all night. It was too much bother to appease their curiosity.

I had got beyond being tired now. I made beds and

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tidied the ward just as if it were an ordinary day, feeling that I didn't care if I never slept again. My legs didn't feel like my own, that was all ; they carried me about like automatons. Some of the men, who hadn't slept all night, were peevish and tiresome, but most of them were grand. The ones who were allowed up helped us as much as they could : they swept the balcony and emptied ash-trays and ran errands for the other patients. They approached as near as they dared and stared in mute sympathy at the violet figures—there were only six of them now, and soon would only be five. Those that had face burns looked like niggers, and the pads over their eyes were startlingly white.

Sister sent me off at twelve o'clock. Jack Roper had woken up, and he was holding his own. He had said "Hullo" again, and had taken a feeding cup of tea from me. I didn't dare ask Sister what she thought about him, in case she should shake her head.

I couldn't sleep for a long time, and when I did, I dreamed about him. I went back on to the ward in the evening, unrested, feeling as if I were moving about in a play. Sister was still there. I don't know when she slept.

MONICA DICKENS, *One Pair of Feet* (1942)

## NOTES

### *A Night Ride*

William Henry Davies (1871-1940) was born at Newport, Monmouthshire, at a public-house kept by his grandparents. After appearing in the Juvenile Court as leader of a street gang of whom the local shopkeepers stood in terror, he was apprenticed to a picture-frame maker, though his real ambition was to become an artist. Of a roving disposition and possessed of a desire for travel and adventure, he worked his way on a ship to America and there became a tramp. For some years he wandered through parts of the United States, Canada and England, becoming acquainted at first hand with the insides of doss-houses and prisons. The story of these wanderings is told in "The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp" (1908), to which Bernard Shaw wrote a preface. Davies afterwards published a continuation of his life-story in "Later Days" (1925) and "The Adventures of Johnny Walker, Tramp" (1926), but neither of these has the freshness, naturalness and spontaneity of his first book, possibly because with the passing of the years not only had the memories of those early days become more remote but he himself had become more sophisticated. On his travels he had been writing occasional verses, and in 1905, at the age of thirty-four, he published his first volume of poetry. A number of other volumes followed, and his "Collected Poems" appeared in 1940. In recognition of his contribution to letters the University of Wales conferred upon him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Literature. "The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp" is a remarkable work that has gone into many editions. It is characterised by a naturalness, breadth of sympathy, and total absence of sensationalism or the melodramatic, as witness the casual, matter-of-fact way in which he tells of the loss of his foot in the present extract.

- P. 1, l. 1. *At this place*: Davies had "beat" his way from the United States into Canada and had been staying for some while at a Salvation Army hostel in Montreal.
1. 20. *The Thames Embankment*: the raised street alongside the Thames in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross. At one time it was noted as a spot favoured by tramps and others who were "down and out" for sleeping in the open.

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Besides W. H. Davies, another well-known literary figure whose name is associated with the Embankment is the poet Francis Thompson.

P. 6, l. 14. *The hotel* : a casual ward, or hostel for vagrants.

P. 8, l. 27. *The engineer* : the driver.

### *The Death of an Old Dog*

William Henry Hudson (1841-1922) is well known for his writings on natural history and country life. He was born near Buenos Aires, though on his father's side he was of Devonshire descent, while his mother could trace her lineage back to the Pilgrim Fathers. Much of his early life was spent out of doors on the Pampas, but in 1869 he came to England, where he stayed for the rest of his days. From middle life onwards, for many years, he lived in poverty in London at a boarding-house kept by his wife but in 1901 a Civil List Pension was granted him, which enabled him to reside for periods in the country and continue his study of the habits of birds and animals, in which he had always been especially interested. When he died in 1922 a bird sanctuary, designed by Jacob Epstein, was placed in Hyde Park as a memorial to him. He wrote a number of books about the countryside and nature, the best known being "A Shepherd's Life" and "The Book of a Naturalist," but his best work is the story of his early years, "Far Away and Long Ago," remarkable for the simplicity and sincerity of the picture it presents.

P. 13, l. 4. *Which brought the eternal note of sadness in* : a reminiscence of Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach," stanza 1, line 14 :—

"Listen ! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles, which the waves draw back, and fling  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in."

l. 27. *Old Pechicho* : a pet sheep-dog that had been adopted by Hudson's family when he was quite a small child. It had come to them as a stray animal, with one of its legs broken, but they tended it, became very fond of it and made it one of the household. Then one day, after being with them several years, it disappeared as mysteriously as it had come. The word *pechicho* is equivalent to "doggie" in English.

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- P. 14, l. 17. *Old John* : the family gardener and odd-job man.  
 l. 26. *Mr. Trigg* : the schoolmaster.  
 P. 15, l. 13. *The young man tied to the post in the barn* : A few months previously young Hudson had been taken by a native lad to a neighbouring barn, where he was shown a young man who had been caught after committing a murder, tied to a post to await conveyance to the jail in the next town.  
 P. 16, l. 3. *Vaughan, Traherne* : Henry Vaughan (1622-1695) and Thomas Traherne (1636-1674), writers of English religious verse.  
 P. 20, l. 26. *The fosse* : a ditch or moat.

### *An Escape from the Boers*

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (Winston Churchill, b. 1874) will always be remembered as the Prime Minister who piloted Great Britain and her Allies to victory in the Second World War. He came of an ancient and distinguished family, being a descendant of the famous John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, who beat the French in the War of the Spanish Succession at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Winston Churchill was educated at Harrow and Sandhurst, and entered the army in 1895. He took part in several campaigns and then, during the Boer War, became war correspondent of the "Morning Post" in South Africa. In 1910 he entered Parliament as Conservative M.P. for Oldham, a constituency which he had previously contested unsuccessfully. Since 1908 he has held all the important Cabinet posts, and in 1940 he became Prime Minister on the resignation of Mr. Neville Chamberlain. He has written books of Travel, History, Politics and Biography, the most important being the four-volume study of the life and times of Marlborough.

"My Early Life," originally published in 1930, has been reprinted many times. The extract given here tells of the author's escape from the Boers after he had been taken prisoner of war. An armoured train in which, in his capacity as war correspondent, he was travelling with some troops, had been ambushed by the enemy. Some of the trucks were derailed, but some others, as well as the engine, remained on the lines. Under the author's direction the engine was uncoupled from the derailed coaches (which were then pushed and heaved just clear of the lines), shunted back and re-coupled to the remainder of the train, and then driven to safety across a bridge spanning



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- a ravine. But in the meantime Winston Churchill and his assistants had been surrounded by Boers and were marched off as prisoners of war.
- P. 23, l. 3. *General Joubert* : the Boer commander.
- l. 11. *The State Model Schools* : where they were being kept as prisoners.
- l. 36. *The two hundred and eighty miles to the Portuguese frontier* : i.e. to the frontier of Portuguese East Africa.
- P. 26, l. 11. *Toujours de l'audace* : French ; literally, "always boldness." A free colloquial translation might be, "It's boldness that does it."
- l. 21. *Pretoria* : the capital of the Boer Republic.
- P. 27, l. 32. *Paul Bultitude's escape from school in "Vice Versa"* : "Vice Versa" was a once-popular novel, published in 1882 by F. Anstey (Thomas Anstey Guthrie). It tells how Paul Bultitude, a middle-aged business man, and his son Dick become the victims of an Indian charm. The outward appearance and form of the father is changed to that of the son, and vice versa, though each retains his original mental characteristics and interests. While Dick (now supposed by everyone to be the father) mismanages the business and scandalises all the family and friends by his frivolous behaviour, Mr. Bultitude, despite all his protests, is sent away to school. He does not show himself very amenable to school discipline, and, threatened with a flogging, he runs away and manages to elude his pursuers by hiding under the seat of a railway carriage. Finally he arrives back at his own home, though not without several narrow escapes from being apprehended and taken back to school.
- P. 30, l. 11. *A Kaffir kraal* : a native village.
- P. 32, l. 32. *The veldt* : open grass-country.
- P. 34, l. 34. *A Planchette pencil* : a small board beneath which are castors and a pencil-point. By resting the fingers lightly on the board one can cause it to move, as if of its own accord, and so to draw or write upon a sheet of paper on which it is standing.
- P. 36, l. 8. *Wer ist da?* : who is there? (Afrikaans).
- P. 38, l. 3. *The local Field Cornet* : the commanding officer of the troops in the district.
- P. 39, l. 21. *They'll all vote for you next time* : In 1899 Winston Churchill had unsuccessfully contested the constituency of Oldham in a parliamentary election (see biographical note above).
- P. 44, l. 33. *The escape of David Balfour and Alan Breck* :

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David Balfour, a young lad of about eighteen, hero of R. L. Stevenson's novel "Kidnapped," had, by force of circumstances, been thrown upon the companionship of Alan Breck, a proscribed Jacobite who had been involved in the rising of 1745 and had since then acted as a secret agent of the exiled Stuart monarch. Alan had shot an English soldier and a warrant was issued for the arrest of both Alan and David. For many days the two hid in the glens and on the moors to avoid capture.

- P. 50, l. 23. *A feu de joie* : firing of guns in celebration of a victory, etc.

### *War in the Air*

Cecil Arthur Lewis (b. Birkenhead, 1898) became suddenly known to the reading public in 1937, when he published "Sagittarius Rising," from which the present extract is taken. Before that, however, he had led a very eventful life. Educated at Dulwich College, University College School, and Oundle, he joined the Royal Flying Corps in the First Great War at the age of eighteen. After the war he took up Civil Aviation and also became interested in the development of wireless. He was one of the founders of the British Broadcasting Company (as it originally was), and since its inception in the early nineteen-twenties he has occupied a number of important and responsible posts in it, as well as in the film industry. He has written several books on the films and upon broadcasting, as well as some plays, but there is little doubt that, from the literary point of view at least, his masterpiece is the autobiographical volume "Sagittarius Rising." The rather enigmatic title, the author tells us in a foreword, is to be explained by the fact that his horoscope showed Sagittarius, the ninth sign of the zodiac, rising, and this, the astrologers would no doubt claim, was the explanation of all that subsequently happened to him.

- P. 53, l. 1. *Pip* : the gunner.  
 P. 54, l. 18. *Klaxon* : a powerful electric hooter.  
 P. 57, l. 11. *The Parasol* : a two-seater monoplane, of French design, with the wing above the body. The pilot sat under the wing as if under an umbrella ; hence the name. For further details of its construction see page 60.  
 P. 61, l. 23. *This Heath Robinson paraphernalia* : Heath Robinson (d. September 1944) was an artist who drew humorous sketches (often for advertising purposes) of complicated and ingenious, but impossible, machinery.

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1. 35. *A sort of Brock's benefit* : i.e. a first-class firework display, from the annual display of fireworks by the manufacturer of this name, given at the Crystal Palace.
- P. 62, l. 31. *Longerons* : Defined by the author earlier as "tail booms, around which the body of the machine was built."
- P. 64, l. 14. *Armageddon* : the final battle, predicted in the Book of Revelation, when the forces of evil shall be overcome by the forces of good, after terrible slaughter and destruction.
1. 23. *The tomb of our Unknown Warrior* : After the war of 1914-1918 the body of an unidentified British soldier, taken from the battlefields of France, was buried in Westminster Abbey.
- P. 65, l. 21. *Nurse Cavell* : Edith Cavell, a nurse in charge of a British hospital in Brussels, who was shot by the Germans in 1915 on a charge of aiding the escape of British and Belgian soldiers so that they might join the Allied armies at the front. At the time the execution was widely publicised as an enemy atrocity. Subsequent legal opinion was that judicially it was justifiable, but tactically, and, from a propagandist point of view, it was a bad blunder on the part of the Germans, since in the eyes of the Allied nations (and some neutral ones) Edith Cavell became a martyr. Her words "Patriotism is not enough" are inscribed on the memorial erected to her near the Church of St. Martin in the Fields, London.

### *Seven Years' Hard*

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was born in Bombay. He was sent to England at an early age and was educated at the United Services College, but returned to India to take up journalism as a career. The extract here given from his autobiography "Something of Myself" tells the story of his experiences during the first few years of his journalistic career. Some of his early poems and stories originally appeared in Indian periodicals, and it was out of his life and experiences in that country that grew two of his most delightful and widely known works—"Kim" and "The Jungle Book." In middle life he travelled extensively in China, Japan, South Africa, Australia and America, and then, after a residence of seven years in the United States, he returned to England to settle in Sussex, a part of the country for which he had an especial affection. Though at one time he enjoyed a considerable vogue as a poet—mainly on the score of his "Barrack-

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Room Ballads"—his final reputation will probably rest on his prose works. He was very conscious of "the white man's burden" and as a result he sometimes allowed Kipling the imperialist to get the better of Kipling the poet in his verses; but his stories are not marred in the same way. "Something of Myself" is not only an autobiography; it is a piece of self-revelation which sheds light on many of its author's other works.

- P. 67, l. 8. *Father and Mother of whom I had seen but little since my sixth year*: While he was at school in England his parents were still living in India.
- P. 69, l. 5. *Runjit Singh's wives*: Runjit (or Ranjit) Singh (1780-1839) was a Sikh prince who became monarch of the Punjab and as such was a staunch ally of Britain against the Afghans.
1. 18. *Prolonged D.T.*: The initials stand for "delirium tremens."
- P. 70, l. 3. *The Mosque of Wazir Khan*: built in 1634, near to Fort Lahore.
1. 18. *A rapparee*: a "franc-tireur." The word was originally employed of irregular Irish pike-men who fought against the English in the campaign of 1688-1689.
  1. 24. *Squeers' method of instruction*: Wackford Squeers was the brutal and incompetent schoolmaster in Dickens's novel "Nicholas Nickleby." His method of education was a very practical one: having taught his pupils how to spell the sentence "Clean the window," he proceeded to impress it on their minds by making them perform the action.
  1. 36. *As the sender was of a high caste . . . was not*: The point is that the sender, being a high-caste Hindu, could not accept anything from the hands of one of a lower caste.
- P. 71, l. 8. *The decalogue*: the ten commandments.
1. 15. *More Asiatico*: in the Asiatic way (Latin).
  1. 19. *Phil Robinson who wrote "In My Indian Garden"*: Philip Stewart Robinson (1847-1902), naturalist and pioneer of Anglo-Indian literature descriptive of natural scenery.
  1. 26. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*: Vergil, "Aeneid," ii. 49. Translated by Conington,  
     "Whate'er it be, a Greek I fear,  
     Though presents in his hand he bear."
  1. 30. *Eurasian*: of mixed European and Asiatic descent.
- P. 72, l. 28. *Articles about Milton*: The English poet John Milton (1608-1674).

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- P. 74. l. 4. *The then Viceroy* : Probably Lord Dufferin, who held office 1884-1888.
- l. 15. *The Indian White Paper* : the draft proposals on the constitution of India which formed the basis for the later Government of India Act (see next note).
- P. 75. l. 12. *The great and epoch-making India Bill* : the Bill which became the Government of India Act of 1935. It gave to India Provincial autonomy and made ultimate provision for a Federal India.
- l. 30. *Araya* : a Hindu sect somewhat akin to the Brahmo Samaj (described below), teaching a broad theism but more distinctly political in character.
- Brahmo Samaj* : a "modernist" Hindu sect founded about 1830 by Rajaram Mohun Roy and later developed by Keshub Chundra Sen. It might be styled Hindu Unitarianism. The phrase means "The Society of the One God." Though a development of Hinduism, it owes much to Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.
- P. 76. l. 9. *The boarding-house in the Brompton Road* : in the South Kensington district of London.
- l. 22. *Hookah fumes* : The hookah is a tobacco pipe of the type very much used in the East. The smoke of the tobacco is drawn, by a long, flexible tube, through a bowl containing scented water, and is thus cooled. The bowl is now often made of porcelain but it was originally a coconut shell ; hence one type of pipe very closely resembling the hookah is called a *narghile*, a word derived from *nargil* (a coconut tree).
- P. 78. l. 10. *Lord Roberts* : a great English soldier, often known as Roberts of Kandahar because of his famous march to that place from Kabul in August 1880. He was made Commander-in-Chief in India in 1885, and later distinguished himself in the Boer War.

### *A Walking Tour*

John Collings Squire (Sir John Squire since 1933) was born at Plymouth in 1884 and educated at Blundell's School, Tiverton, afterwards proceeding to St. John's College, Cambridge. From early days he has followed a literary and journalistic career, for in 1913 he became Literary Editor of "The New Statesman" and from 1917-1918 was Acting Editor. Between 1919 and 1934, as Editor of "The London Mercury" and literary critic to "The Observer," he attained a foremost place in English letters ; but even before this he had become known as a poet of

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distinction. He has compiled and edited a number of anthologies of verse, is the General Editor of Macmillan's English Men of Letters Series, and is a Governor of the Old Vic Theatre. "The Honeysuckle and the Bee" is an account of his reminiscences, built around a walking tour from London to his native county of Devonshire, in which he re-traversed a good deal of the ground familiar to him in earlier days. The title of the work was suggested by the words of a popular song familiar to the writer in his youth :—

"You are my honeysuckle,  
I am the bee. . . ."

P. 78, l. 28. *After the war* : i.e. the war of 1914-1918.

P. 80, ll. 7-9. *Dartmoor . . . Cullompton* : all places in Devonshire.

ll. 9-10. *My old school, Blundell's* : See biographical note above. The school was so called because it was founded by Peter Blundell in 1604. It has been immortalised in the novel "Lorna Doone," the hero of which, like its author (R. D. Blackmore), was a scholar of Blundell's.

l. 20. *The Hog's Back* : the name given to a ridge of the Downs, about half a mile in breadth, between Farnham and Guildford.

l. 28. *Algernon Charles Swinburne* : English poet, 1832-1909. He spent the last thirty years of his life at the Pines at Putney, the house of his friend Theodore Watts-Dunton (see next note).

ll. 29-30. *Theodore Watts-Dunton* : English novelist, 1832-1914. He was one of a well-known group of literary figures in the latter part of the last century, which included Swinburne and the Rossettis.

ll. 36-37. *Whom . . . no decent person wished to accost* : Swinburne held agnostic views on matters of religion and was a professed republican in politics, both sufficient in the time of Queen Victoria to put him outside the pale of respectable society. He had, too, advanced views on love and marriage and in later years led a somewhat dissipated life.

P. 81, l. 3. *When the hounds of Spring are on Winter's traces* : the opening line of the well-known chorus from Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon" :—

"When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain."

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1. 19. *The roaring Republican* : See note to P. 80, ll. 36-37 above.
1. 28. *George Meredith* : English novelist and poet (1828-1909). His best-known novels are "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel" (1859), "Evan Harrington" (1861), "The Egoist" (1879) and "Diana of the Crossways" (1885).
1. 29. *On Edward Clodd's balcony at Aldeborough* : Edward Clodd (1840-1930) was a writer on scientific subjects and on anthropology, to which he made some original contributions. He was born, lived and died at Aldeburgh and was educated at the local grammar school. His opinions, like those of Swinburne, inclined towards agnosticism—to-day termed more euphemistically "Rationalism."
1. 33. *Rupert Brooke, "young Apollo golden-haired"* : the young English poet (1887-1915) who died while serving in the war of 1914-1918. Some of the best known of his poems arose out of his spiritual reaction to the war, and in the years that immediately followed it he was much read and praised ; but recent criticism has doubted whether, had he lived, he would have become a really great poet.
- P. 82, l. 2. *Campbell-Bannerman was Prime Minister* : Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, leader of the Liberal Party, was Prime Minister 1906-1908.
1. 3. *Asquith* : Herbert Henry Asquith (1852-1928) was one of the rising men of the Liberal Party during the Campbell-Bannerman administration. He succeeded Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister in 1908 and resigned the office in 1916, when he was replaced by Mr. Lloyd George. He was later created Earl of Oxford and Asquith.
11. 3-4. *We had a Two-Power Standard on the seas* : In the early years of the twentieth century the policy of the Government was to ensure that the British Navy should be of such a strength that it would be a match for those of any other two powers combined.
- P. 83, l. 6. *Coombe* : a village and (with New Malden) a parish two miles east of Kingston-on-Thames.
1. 26. *Olney* : a small town in Buckinghamshire, the home of the eighteenth-century poet William Cowper. The lines which follow are quoted from the opening of Cowper's poem "The Poplar Field," in which he laments the disappearance of a favourite clump of poplar trees.
- P. 84, ll. 4-5. *The South African and Frontier Wars* : The South African War was the Boer War of 1899-1902, the Frontier Wars the several conflicts with native tribes in the Frontier

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Provinces of India in the latter years of the nineteenth century.

1. 10. *George Morland* : English painter of animal and rustic scenes (1763-1804). One of his best-known pictures is that of "The Idle and Industrious Mechanic."
1. 28. *Pan, fauns and nymphs* : Pan was the Greek god of the woods and fields, fauns (or satyrs) woodland creatures half goat and half man, and nymphs the lesser goddesses with whom the Greeks peopled all parts of nature.
- P. 85, l. 13. *Matthew Arnold* : English poet (1822-1888). The scene of his poem "The Scholar Gipsy" is in the Oxford district and the subject of it a poor Oxford scholar who, in the later Middle Ages, becoming tired of profitless study, left the University and set out to learn wisdom by roaming the world with the gipsies. The legend ran that his spirit was still to be seen at times lingering amongst the haunts of his student days.
1. 16. *One of the tallest of the Folly Towers, Lord Berners'* : an unfinished building in the neighbourhood of Faringdon. It has been attributed traditionally to some extravagant whim of Lord Berners, but expert investigation had shown that it is of more recent date.
1. 19. *Laudator temporis acti* : a Latin phrase used to denote one who is given to praising and admiring the past, its manners, achievements, etc.
- P. 87, l. 14. *Appeal ad misericordiam* : appeal to pity (Latin).
1. 17. *Conticuerunt omnes*, as *Virgil* remarks at the beginning of the second book of the "*Aeneid*" : they all held their peace.
- P. 88, l. 12. *Even with Thermopylae in mind* : Thermopylae was a celebrated pass leading from Thessaly into Locris. The word means "Hot Gates," as there were hot water springs in the pass. It was the scene of the famous stand of Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans against the hosts of Xerxes in 480 B.C.
- P. 90, ll. 12-13. *Sidney Sussex* : Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. The "Clare man" referred to later in the paragraph is, of course, a student from Clare College.
- ll. 28-29. "*East Lynne*" : a play founded on the novel of that name by Mrs. Henry Wood (1814-1887).
1. 30. "*The School for Scandal*" : the brilliant comedy by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, first produced in 1777.
1. 31. *Planché* : J. R. Planché, English dramatist (1796-1880). He produced about seventy original pieces and ninety adaptations, as well as four prose works. He held the State office of Somerset Herald.



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1. 32. *Robertson's "Still Waters Run Deep"* : Presumably the dramatist T. W. Robertson (1829-1871) is intended ; but the only play of this name now traceable is one by Tom Taylor, first acted 1855.
1. 35. *A work . . . called "King René's Daughter"* : a tragedy by Fred E. Weatherby, first acted at Edinburgh, October 2, 1873, is probably the play referred to here, though there are several other pieces with the same title.
- P. 91, ll. 20-21. *Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Crummles* : leaders of a band of strolling players in Dickens's "Nicholas Nickleby."
- P. 92, l. 36. *A heavy Kitchener moustache* : Lord Kitchener, British general in the Boer War and Chief of Staff in the early years of the war of 1914-1918, wore a heavy, drooping moustache, which became very familiar from his photograph on recruiting posters.

### *A London Taxi Driver*

Born in poverty in London, Herbert Hodge received but an elementary education and after leaving school became a garage assistant at a taxi-cab dépôt. In the war of 1914-1918 he tried to enlist in the army but was rejected on medical grounds, so he emigrated to Canada. After a few years he returned to England and became a taxi driver. For a while he was active in politics and might have been adopted as a prospective parliamentary candidate, but he resigned from the party with which he had allied himself. After several abortive attempts to write novels and stories he turned his attention to autobiography and produced "It's Draughty in Front." He has since written two other books, "Cab, Sir?" and "A Cockney on Main Street."

- P. 94, l. 27. *My badge* : to denote that he was a licensed and officially recognised taxi driver.
- P. 96, ll. 33-34. *A minimum time for earning and a maximum for writing* : Hodge's ambition was to be a writer. He only regarded taxi-driving as a means of earning sufficient to keep himself while he wrote his projected books and until, as he fondly hoped, he was able to make enough from authorship to render unnecessary any other occupation.
- P. 97, l. 6. *Prima donnas* : first ladies, *i.e.* the leading ladies in opera.
- P. 98, l. 21. *"Meeting Old Bill"* : a slang phrase current amongst taximen, meaning "having an exceptional run of good luck."
- P. 104, l. 35. *"Butter-boys"* : new-comers.

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- P. 108, ll. 33-34. *A ticket-of-leave man* : a convicted prisoner, released on parole before his sentence is expired.  
 P. 110, l. 32. *The Marx Brothers* : two popular comedians of the day.

### *Divine Worship*

Ralph Hale Mottram (b. 1883), novelist, biographer and critic, is a native of Norwich and has lived there all his life. In his early days he was employed in a bank and from 1914 to 1919 was in the army. As an outcome of his experiences in the war he wrote the novel which immediately put him in the front rank of the coming men of letters—"The Spanish Farm" (1924). It was by far the best war novel produced in an age when such works were legion, and was awarded the Hawthornden Prize. Sequels subsequently appeared, entitled "Sixty-Four," "Ninety-Four" and "The Crime at Venderlynden's," the three works together making what is usually known as "The Spanish Farm Trilogy." R. H. Mottram's reputation was now established and other novels, as well as short stories, succeeded. He has also written several books on Norwich and the Fen Country and their associations, and a critical biography of the Norwich painter, Crome. His "Autobiography with a Difference" is not only the writer's life-story; it is also a charmingly human and sympathetic picture of an average English middle-class household at the end of the last century and during the early years of this. The religious upbringing which he describes in the extract given in the present book has had an abiding influence, for he has been a lifelong, staunch Non-conformist. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and from 1943 to 1944 was President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

- P. 112, l. 3. *On Sundays he went to chapel* : The chapel in question was the Octagon Chapel, one of the oldest Dissenting places of worship in Norwich. Built in 1755 as a Presbyterian foundation, it later became Unitarian, as did most of the English Presbyterian chapels. John Wesley called it "the most elegant meeting-house in Europe." Others less complimentary called it "the Devil's cucumber frame," as the writer notes on page 117.  
 P. 114, ll. 5-6. *Our own cherished Cathedral* : Norwich Cathedral.  
 P. 116, l. 3. *Bacon's house* : Sir Nathaniel Bacon (1547-1622), son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal to Queen Elizabeth, built a house in Norwich about 1604.

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and lived there until his death. Only half the original building now remains, but it has been very well restored and renovated.

- I. 14. *The celebrated East Anglian Association* : more correctly the Eastern Association. In the Civil War the Fen District was, as a whole, loyal to the Parliamentary side. On December 20, 1642, Parliament combined the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridge, Hertford, the Isle of Ely and the City of Norwich for purposes of mutual defence and preservation. This Eastern Association was authorised to raise forces of horse and foot, and by ordinance dated September 20, 1643, when Lincolnshire was added, was empowered to levy taxes.
- II. 33-36. *The novels of Dumas . . . Victor Hugo . . . and Conan Doyle* : the two well-known French novelists Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870) and Victor Hugo (1802-1885), and the English writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), creator of Sherlock Holmes.
- P. 117, l. 32. *The classical baroque* : a style of architecture, originating in Renaissance Rome, characterised by cupolas, pillars, rounded arches and considerable ornamentation.
- P. 118, ll. 19-20. *Lest there should be any suspicion of an eastern position about it* : In both Anglican and Roman Catholic churches it is usual to place the altar at the eastern end of the building. Many of the older Nonconformist churches and chapels deliberately avoided placing it in that position, to show on the one hand their complete break with Anglicanism, and on the other their liberation from "superstition."

### *A Kentish Boyhood*

Siegfried Loraine Sassoon was born in 1886 at Brenchley, near Paddock Wood, Kent. He was educated first privately by a tutor at home, and then at Marlborough. During the war of 1914-1918 he served in France and became one of the foremost of the young poets whom that war produced. His poem "Everyone suddenly burst out singing" was printed in many anthologies. Periodically since then he has published volumes of verse, much of it satirical in nature ; but it was "Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man" (1928), for which he was awarded the Hawthornden Prize, that first gained him wide notice. This was followed by "Memoirs of an Infantry Officer" (1930) and "Sherston's Progress" (1936), the three being subsequently printed together as "The Memoirs of George Sherston."

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He has written three instalments of his life-story in "The Old Century and Seven More Years" (1938), "The Weald of Youth" (1942) and "Siegfried's Journey" (1945). The "Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man" is fictitious autobiography; that is to say, most of the characters and places are real but appear under fictitious names, while most of the episodes, though not authentic in every detail, are founded upon fact. "The Old Century," on the other hand, has nothing of fiction about it; the author seeks to re-create in retrospect the life that he lived and the world that he knew up to a few years before the first Great War. It is a world that seems very far removed from us now; hence, perhaps, the air of nostalgia which pervades the work.

- P. 119, l. 22. *Mr. Moon*: a retired elementary schoolmaster who had been engaged as tutor to the author and his brothers. Elsewhere he is described as "a person with silver hair and a straggling moustache—a tall, tired, stooping man, who never spoke fast and always wore the same black tail-coat. He was a tectotaler, too; he told us that he had taken the blue ribbon as a youth and had never regretted it. . . . His manner was meekly authoritative, but we obeyed him, and took pains over our lessons because we were fond of him."
1. 30. *Tom Richardson*: the groom. He appears in the "Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man" as Tom Dixon.
- P. 120, ll. 3-4. *Emily Eyles*: the parlour-maid.
11. 15-16. *Longfellow, Shelley and Tennyson*: the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) and the two great English poets Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892). Tennyson had for many years been Poet Laureate and had enjoyed a vogue probably unequalled by any either before or since his time.
1. 18. "*The Water Babies*": a story by Charles Kingsley (1863), which at one time was a great favourite with children. It tells how Tom, a little chimney sweep employed by a brutal master, Mr. Grimes, runs away, falls into a river and is transformed into a water baby. He makes friends with all the river creatures and learns the wickedness of inflicting suffering upon even the humblest.
- P. 121, l. 4. *Tintoretto's "Last Judgment"*: Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-1594) was one of the most famous of the Venetian school of painters. In his early days he had been a pupil of Titian. John Ruskin ("The Stones of Venice") placed

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him above his master and on a level with Michelangelo, expressing the opinion that his picture of the Last Judgment was the greatest of several on that subject. Jacopo's real name was Robusti; he received the surname (or nickname) Tintoretto because his father had been a dyer.

- l. 7. "*The Lady of Shalott*": a poem by Tennyson based on the Arthurian legend. The Lady, confined in a tower on the island of Shalott, passes her time by weaving a web. She has been forbidden to look out of the window on pain of a curse falling upon her, but she can see the life of the outside world, and the people passing up and down to Camelot, reflected in a mirror on the wall. One day she sees in her mirror Sir Lancelot passing by. Forgetting the prohibition, she goes to the window to gaze at him, and immediately the mirror cracks in two. Some weeks later she leaves her tower, gets into a boat which is anchored at the foot, and floats down the river to "many-towered Camelot." As the boat scrapes the quay King Arthur's knights, amongst them Sir Lancelot himself, come out to look upon it, and find the Lady of Shalott dead.
- l. 10. *Ellen Batty*: an old friend of the author's mother, who came to stay with her after the death of her husband and became the boys' first governess. "She was," Sassoon writes, "an old hand at keeping children amused and had an everlasting stock of stories. She could make almost anything into a story, but her best ones were about India."
- ll. 16-17. *Pre-Raphaelite pictures*: The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a school of English painters founded in the second half of the nineteenth century by John Ruskin and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Other members of the group were Holman Hunt, Sir John Millais and Burne-Jones. The Preraphaelites believed that English painting had declined since the sixteenth century owing to a slavish following and imitation of Raphael, whose influence upon the painters who immediately followed him and did not possess his unique genius had been anything but salutary. A renaissance could only be brought about, they contended, by a conscious return to the technique and spirit of an earlier age. Hence they affected a mediaevalism and laid emphasis on simplicity, directness and precision of workmanship.
- l. 31. *Wateringbury*: a village on the Medway, about five miles from Sassoon's home and eight from Maidstone, the county town of Kent.

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- P. 123, l. 8. *Paddock Wood station* : the nearest railway station to the writer's home, at a distance of about a mile and a half. It is this village that figures in the "Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man" as Baldock Wood.
- l. 17. *a house-leek* : a plant with a thick stem and cluster of leaves resembling those of a leek. It bears pink flowers and usually grows on the walls and roofs of houses.
- P. 124, l. 26. "*The Build*" : a "ramshackle shanty," as Sassoon calls it, built by the author and his two brothers on the edge of their large garden.
- P. 125, l. 19. *Reeves* : the head gardener, "a short, hasty-tempered man, with a beard and brown bowler hat."
- P. 126, ll. 6-7. *Old Harrison Weir* : animal-artist and author (1824-1906). He drew many pictures for the "Illustrated London News" and for books of natural history, and also published a work entitled "Our Cats and All About Them." He it was who built and first occupied Weirleigh, the house which later became the home of the Sassoons.
- P. 127, l. 13. *Auntie Rachel* : his father's sister, Mrs. Frederick Beer, for a number of years editor of the "Sunday Times."
- l. 15. *Gray's "Elegy"* : the famous "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), by Thomas Gray. What the poet actually wrote, of course, was "fades," "droning" and "drowsy."
- P. 129, ll. 12-13. *One of May and Bessie's brothers* : May and Bessie Marchant, two friends of his mother's.
- l. 34. *One of H. Rider Haggard's stories* : a reference to the English novelist Sir H. Rider Haggard (1856-1925). His best-known works are "King Solomon's Mines" (1886), "Allan Quartermain" (1887), "She" (1887) and "Ayesha" (1905). Most of his tales have an Eastern setting and atmosphere.
- P. 130, l. 21. *Hop-gardens* : the large plantations in which hops are grown. No one at all familiar with the hop-growing districts ever speaks of a hop-field.
- ll. 21-22. *The cowls of hop-kilns (or oast houses)* : Oast houses are the buildings in which hops are dried after they have been picked. A kiln consists of a cylindrical brick chamber with a conical roof, on the top of which is a white wooden "cowl" that turns with the wind so as to regulate the draught for the drying process. Strictly speaking, "hop-kiln" is not synonymous with "oast house," as the sentence suggests it is. The kiln is only a part of the oast house ; many oast houses have more than one kiln.

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- ll. 24-25. *Uncle Don . . . the Works*: John Donaldson (called "Uncle Don") had married a sister of the writer's mother and with his brother-in-law John Thorneycroft was a partner in the Thorneycroft engineering and ship-building works at Chiswick.
- P. 131, l. 11. *Tenniel's weekly cartoon in "Punch"*: Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914) was a well-known cartoonist who for many years drew political cartoons for "Punch." His most famous was that entitled "Dropping the Pilot," which appeared on March 20, 1890, on the occasion of the young Emperor William II of Germany's dismissal of Bismarck.
  - l. 12. *The Jubilee bonfires*: to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, 1897.
  - l. 19. *Wirgie*: the nickname of Miss Helen Wirgman, a friend of the family.
  - P. 132, l. 5. *Brenchley*: the neighbouring village, about one and a half miles farther up the hill. Though in the parish of Brenchley, the Sassoons' house stood about midway between that village and Paddock Wood (see p. 123 and note above). Brenchley is the Butley of the "Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man."
  - P. 133, l. 20. *Mascalls*: the name of Major Horrocks's house.
  - l. 37. *Elysium*: the place where, according to Greek mythology, the souls of the departed enjoyed eternal bliss. It was bathed in perpetual sunshine and its climate was always warm and pleasant.
  - P. 134, ll. 12-13. *Fred Archer*: a famous jockey (1857-1886). He created a record by riding six winners in one day and 257 in one year. It was said that when he rode in the Derby he rounded Tattenham Corner with one leg over the rails.
  - l. 31. *A poke-bonnet*: a bonnet with a projecting brim, similar to those worn by women in the Salvation Army.
  - P. 135, l. 24. *I Zingari colours*: I Zingari (Italian: the gipsies) is an amateur cricket club, founded in 1845, membership of which is restricted to ex-public school men and members of the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges. Its colours are red, yellow and black stripes. The first rule of the club lays it down that "the entrance fee shall be nothing and the annual subscription shall not exceed the entrance fee." It has no ground of its own but plays on the ground of the club it challenges. Membership, which must be approved by the Master of the club, is a social rather than a cricketing distinction.

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1. 31. *An intaglio ring* : a ring with a figure or design engraved in it or in the stone of it. The word comes from the Italian *intagliare*, to cut.
- P. 136, l. 7. *Mudie's Library* : a well-known circulating library in London, opened in 1842 by the bookseller Charles Edward Mudie. It was wound up in 1937.
- ll. 9-10. "*Under the Red Robe*," by Stanley Weyman : Stanley Weyman (1855-1928) was a well-known writer of historical stories which were very popular amongst boys of the last generation. "*Under the Red Robe*" is a tale of France in the time of Richelieu.
- l. 18. *Fräulein* : the German governess who had displaced Mr. Moon.
- P. 137, l. 30. *The G. F. Watts of poetry* : George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) was a well-known painter, prints of many of whose pictures adorned the Sassoons' home. The writer mentions especially that of "*Love and Death*." Watts' theme in most of his works (other than his portraits) was the power of love and the fallacy of the fear of death.
- P. 138, l. 16. "*Green Pastures and Piccadilly*" : a novel, published in 1877, by William Black (1841-1898).
- l. 17. *Tolstoy* : Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), famous Russian novelist and writer on social, moral and religious themes. His works best known to English readers are "*War and Peace*" and "*Anna Karenina*." By his writings he did much to pave the way for the Revolution (though he would not have approved of the violence that accompanied it), and to-day his name is greatly revered in the Soviet Union.

### *Economies and Charities*

As a young woman Edith Olivier's main ambition was that she should not end her life without knowing Mr. Walkley — A. B. Walkley, the dramatic critic of "*The Times*." This ambition was not to be fulfilled, for Walkley died in 1926 without having made the acquaintance of Miss Olivier ; but during a full if not a spectacular life she has made other contacts equally interesting, for, herself a woman of distinctive literary and artistic gifts, she has enjoyed the friendship of such people as Rex Whistler, Lord David Cecil, Lord Ponsonby, Anne Douglas Sedgwick, G. M. Young, Sir Osbert Sitwell and Siegfried Sassoon.

The daughter of the Rev. Dacres Olivier, Rector of



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Wilton, Edith Olivier was born at the Rectory and has lived in the district all her life. She was educated first privately at home and then at St. Hugh's College, Oxford. During the War of 1914-1918 she organised the Women's Land Army in Wiltshire and for three successive years (1938-1941) she has been Lord Mayor of Wilton. Her literary works include a study of Alexander Cruden, of Concordance fame, a novel entitled "Dwarf's Blood," and "Night Thoughts of a Country Landlady." "Without Knowing Mr. Walkley" is a delightfully written volume of memoirs and gives an excellent picture of Wiltshire country life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

- P. 139, l. 27. *The Funds* : British Government securities.
- P. 140, l. 16. *Wilton* : three miles north-west of Salisbury. Famous for its manufacture of carpets.
- P. 141, l. 26. *Pièce de résistance* : the main dish.
  - 1. 29. *Bonnes-bouches* : delicacies.
- P. 142, l. 2. *Cocoa-nibs* : cocoa beans, after the husks have been removed. At one time families used to buy the cocoa beans and grind them at home, as is still the case with coffee.
  - 11. 18-19. *Bishop Wordsworth* : John Wordsworth (1843-1911). He became Bishop of Salisbury, in which diocese Wilton was situated, in 1885 and held the office until his death.
- P. 144, l. 2. *The Vestal Virgins* : the virgin priestesses of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, in whose temple in the Roman Forum a fire was kept perpetually burning.
  - 1. 4. *Prometheus* : according to Greek mythology the son of Iapetus and Clymene. He stole fire from heaven in a hollow tube and taught humanity many useful arts.
    - 1. 22. *Bradshaw* : Bradshaw's Railway Guide.
- P. 147, l. 16. *The Guardians* : Until recent years the Poor Law was administered by a body composed of a number of people of a certain social status selected from the parishes in a given area, and known as the Board of Guardians of the Poor.
- P. 150, l. 23. *Consommé* : a clear, rich broth or soup.
- P. 152, l. 17. *For years after 1838* : In 1838 the Registration Act was placed on the Statute Book, which made it compulsory to register all births, deaths and marriages, but there was no provision in the Act for the issue of a birth certificate. An entry in a church register was

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accepted as legal proof, but unfortunately many church registers had been badly kept.

### *His Father's Funeral*

Sean O'Casey, most distinguished of modern Irish dramatists, was born in Dublin in the early eighties of the last century. The household into which he came (a Protestant one in a predominantly Catholic city) was poor and already had a number of children in it. Several others had died in infancy and Sean himself was not strong. He was for long afflicted with eye trouble and was in danger of losing his sight. He lost his father when he was still quite a young boy, with the result that any chances of education that had ever existed for him now vanished completely. In "Who's Who" he tells us that he received most of his schooling in the streets. From his autobiography one gathers that there were sporadic attendances at school, but his experiences there were not of the happiest. As a young man he worked as a labourer, but he was always interested in the theatre (his mother had come of a theatrical family) and made several attempts at play-writing. His first success came with "Juno and the Paycock," a somewhat sardonic comedy, the material for which was derived largely from his own experiences of Irish life and political animosities. This was followed by "The Plough and the Stars," "The Silver Tassie," "Within the Gates," "Purple Dust," "The Star Turns Red," and "Red Roses For Me."

In "I Knock at the Door" Sean O'Casey tells the story of his life up to about the age of twelve, and at the same time gives us a vivid if not a very pleasant picture of life in Dublin at the end of the last century. The "Johnny" of the book is, of course, the author himself.

Recently two further instalments of the autobiography have appeared under the titles "Pictures in the Hallway" and "Drums Under the Windows."

- P. 155, ll. 32-33. *Dockin' t'animals*: clipping the horses' tails.
- P. 157, l. 7. *Rotto*: drunk.
- l. 23. *Shapin'*: "swanking."
- P. 162, l. 23. *Side-cars*: small carriages with seats at each side, so that the occupants were facing each other.
- ll. 23, 29, 37. *Michael . . . Archie . . . Tom*: Johnny's elder brothers.
- P. 164, l. 8. *Georgian ladies*: those of the reigns of George II

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to George IV (1727-1830) when Dublin was a centre of fashion.

### *Country Memories*

Esther Hallam Meynell is related by marriage to a well-known literary family. She is the author of a number of books, including one on Hans Andersen and another on Bach, but her chief interest is in the countryside, especially that of Sussex, and the homely things of life, and it is with these for the most part that her works deal. "A Woman Talking" comprises her "remembrances of things past," as she herself puts it. Not only does it give a charming picture of the Sussex (and Yorkshire) that she knew as a girl, but it also contains some discerning literary criticism and some very personal and intimate portraits of famous people whom she has met.

- P. 169, l. 31. *A Windsor chair*: a style of wooden chair originally made at Windsor or in the vicinity from the beech trees that grew there.
- P. 171, l. 10. *Mr. Walter de la Mare*: modern poet and short-story writer (b. 1873). The story "All Hallows" is contained in his volume "The Connoisseur and Other Stories" (1926) and is the tale, told by an old half-crazed verger to a party of visitors, of the mystery surrounding an old decaying church.
1. 37. *Heathfield . . . Ditchling*: two villages in Sussex. In the adjoining counties Sussex is known as "Silly Sussex" and countless stories are current amongst the older generation illustrating the Sussex person's lack of wit and common sense. Most of them can probably be relegated to the same class as those purporting to exemplify the meanness of the Aberdonian.
- P. 172, l. 28. "*Burghersh, or the Pleasures of a Country Life*": a small book of ninety pages, published anonymously in 1855.
- P. 173, l. 23. "*The Countryman*": a high-class literary journal devoted mainly to rural matters, as its title would suggest.
1. 31. "*Glimpses of Rural Life in Sussex During the Last Hundred Years*" . . . by Alice Catharine Day: a pamphlet of 54 pages, published in 1927.
- P. 175, l. 2. *Hop poles*: poles about fourteen or fifteen feet high, up which the hops climb. This method of training and supporting the hop plant was the usual one up to about twenty years ago, but it has now been largely dis-

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- placed by a system of strings stretched from a peg in the ground to a wire framework overhead.
1. 27. *The Hadlow Down district of Sussex*: about five miles north-east of Uckfield.
  - P. 177, l. 18. *Promethean fire*: an inflammable mixture composed of chlorate of potash and sugar, wrapped in a piece of paper. For Prometheus, see note to P. 144, l. 4.
  1. 28. *Gilbert White*: English writer on natural history (1720-1793) and author of "The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne."
  - P. 178, l. 33. *A copyholder*: at one time one who held land at the will of the lord of the manor; now one who holds land in accordance with conditions laid down and handed on in the rolls of the manor.
  1. 35. *The Black Death*: an epidemic of bubonic plague which spread over Europe in the latter part of the fourteenth century. In England between the years 1347 and 1356 about one-third of the population died of it.
  - P. 179, l. 13. *Murrain*: cattle plague.

### *The Hireling*

Fred Kitchen was born at Edwinstowe in the Sherwood Forest district of Nottinghamshire in 1890, but when he was quite a small child his parents moved into Yorkshire. His father, he tells us, "was a cowman, getting seventeen shillings a week, free house and garden and a quart of new milk each day," and from the very beginning it was taken for granted that the son would follow in his father's footsteps. He left school at the age of thirteen and became a "farmer's boy." For the biggest part of his life he has worked as a farm labourer, though for a time he left the country and had a milk round in Sheffield. His interest in literature led him to join classes of the Workers' Educational Association, and it was largely as a result of the tuition and encouragement that he received in these classes that he "crashed into authorship," as he puts it, with his autobiography "Brother to the Ox." He is also author of "Life on the Land," "The Farming Front" and a volume of animal stories entitled "Jesse and His Friends." He still retains his interest in the W.E.A. and is a member of the Council of that body for the South Yorkshire District.

- P. 180, l. 16. *Martilemas week*: Martinmas week, i.e. the week following the feast of St. Martin, on November 11th. The discrepancy in the dates is to be explained by the fact

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that when, on the reform of the calendar in 1752, eleven days were dropped, so that September 14th became September 3rd, in many parts of the country the fairs, folk-customs and institutions connected with religious festivals continued to be observed on the old day, irrespective of the date, *i.e.* eleven days later than the "reformed" festival. Thus, though Michaelmas Day is on September 29th, many Michaelmas fairs are held on October 10th. Similarly the Treasury's financial year starts on April 5th, which in the old-style calendar would have been March 25th, the first day of the legal year.

1. 20. *The Statutes Fair*: an annual fair at which servants and workmen offered themselves for hire. Each occupation affixed a distinctive token or sign to the cap or to some part of the dress. The insignia of the domestic servant was a mop, hence it was sometimes called Mop Fair.
- P. 181, l. 17. *Frauchless wenches*: good-for-nothing girls. In the speech of Yorkshire the word *wench* is still widely used and has not the same rather derogatory significance that it has in Standard English. One can speak of a "good-looking wench" without any sense of incongruity.
- P. 182, ll. 18-20. *Tha wants . . . parridge*: Yorkshire dialect. "You want to sharpen yourself up of a morning; here you've been an hour milking four cows, and the calves are waiting for their porridge." Amongst the Yorkshire working class, both rural and urban, the second person singular (*thou*) is commonly used in conversation.
- P. 183, l. 3. *Bridled-out*: went out to start work.
1. 18. *Little yarker*: a strong or sturdy little fellow. The word was originally applied to a horse to denote its strength and "spirit." Perhaps it is connected with the verb "to jerk."
1. 31. "*Rosie O'Grady*" or "*Irish Molly O*": two popular sentimental songs of the time.
- P. 184, l. 18. *Kindling*: firewood.
1. 20. *The "fotherham"*: the barn or that part of the stable where the "fother" (fodder) was kept.
- P. 185 l. 18. *Gawk*: fool.
- P. 186, ll. 7-8. *Fox-and-geese*: an ancient game played on a board with pegs and pieces, like draughtmen. One player has only one piece (the fox), while the other has sixteen pieces (the geese).
1. 19. *En yer owt for 'im to do a minute?*: Again Yorkshire dialect: "Haven't you anything for him to do for a minute?"

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1. 26. *Lindholme* : a village on the borders of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.
- P. 187, l. 3. A "*Lincy*" : a Lincolnshire man.
1. 4. *Boggarts* : goblins, bogies.
1. 34. *White sparrows* : Mr. Kitchen has himself kindly supplied the following note on this allusion. "There seem to have been some queer carryings-on in the Doncaster district in the eighteenth century. The most notable →and perhaps the most credible—was that attributed to Jemmy Hurst of Rawcliffe, whose remarkable history can be obtained from most booksellers in Doncaster. Some of the others are too bad to be true, as, for example, that of the owner of Lindum (Lindholme) Hall, who sold himself to the Devil on condition that he could have anything he wished for on earth. His first wish was "that all them sparrows in yon barn shall be turned white." His Satanic Majesty obliged and, they say, there have been white sparrows at Lindholme ever since, though I am bound to say that I have never seen one."
1. 37. *To get a plough-coulter laid* : i.e. sharpened and set.
- P. 188, l. 23. *An open back-end* : a mild autumn.
1. 32. *Caddis* : ribbon.
- P. 190, l. 9. *The plough-ails* : The handles of the plough are called "ails" in some districts of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.
1. 13. *He's som'dy's poor bairn* : "He's somebody's poor child."
1. 34. *Forenoon drinkings* : morning lunch. The term "drinkings" is used to refer to food as well as liquor in parts of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.
1. 37. *Bargas* : devil.  
*Thi sen* : thyself.
- P. 191, ll. 31-33. *Tha doesna . . . like them* : "No you don't ! You don't go between my sheets with paws like those."
- ll. 33-34. *While I was ready to howl with pain* : In the dialect of several of the northern counties of England "while" is used in the sense of "until."
- P. 193, l. 21. *Digger ploughs* : mechanical ploughs, with a "digger" which cleaves the ground and turns it up as the machine is driven along.
1. 22. *Dutch barns* : A Dutch barn is a large shed, covered with a roof but open at the sides, in which hay, etc., is stored, so obviating the need for thatching the stack.
- P. 194, ll. 35-36. "*Ally Sloper*" : a humorous paper of the latter days of the last century. "*Ally Sloper*" was the

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predecessor of the modern "comic" as "The Red Letter" was of the modern "blood."

- P. 195, l. 2. *Lady Brassey*: Anne, Baroness Brassey (1839-1887), author of books dealing with adventurous sea voyages. Her best-known work is "The Voyage of the Sunbeam" (1878).
- l. 3. *Captain Marryat*: Frederick Marryat (1792-1848), a once-popular writer of sea stories for boys. He is well known as the author of "Peter Simple" and "Mr. Midshipman Easy."
- Charles Lever*: Irish novelist (1806-1872). His books were once popular but are little read now.
- l. 4. *Rammel*: rubbish.
- l. 16. *Loosed*: dismissed.

### *Life in a Hospital Ward*

Monica Dickens is the great-granddaughter of Charles Dickens and granddaughter of Sir Henry Dickens, the eminent K.C. After a typical middle-class upbringing and education she decided that she wanted to earn her own living and at the same time get to know something of how other people lived, so she placed her name on the books of a domestic servants' agency and finally succeeded in getting a situation, despite her comparative inexperience. She worked as a servant in several different households, good, bad and indifferent, and certainly got to know something about other people's lives: not only those of her fellow-servants but also of her various mistresses and their families. The story of these experiences is told in "One Pair of Hands." Soon after the beginning of the war she became a V.A.D. nurse and gained material for another book, "One Pair of Feet," from which the present extract is taken. She has also written a novel entitled "Mariana."

- P. 197, l. 23. *Fanny Churchman*: the matron. Her full name was Sarah P. Churchman. "Fanny" was a nickname bestowed on her by the nurses.
- P. 198, l. 29. "*Sister Fairchild*": "*Sister Fairchild's Manual for Nurses*," a book the writer had bought for ninepence at a second-hand shop in Charing Cross Road.
- P. 199, l. 13. *William Forrest*: the name of one of the wards at the hospital.
- l. 14. *Parry*: another of the nurses.
- P. 200, l. 24. *Gunter*: a rather unsociable and not too intelligent Yorkshire girl who constantly "haunted" the narrator.

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- P. 201, l. 2. *Snow White and Tinkerbell* : Snow White was the heroine of the story "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," popularised by Walt Disney's film of that name, and Tinkerbell a fairy in J. M. Barrie's "Peter Pan."
- P. 203, l. 18. *The new Pro* : "Pro" is short for *probationer*.
- P. 206, ll. 5-6. *There'll Always Be a Nengland* : "There'll Always be an England" was a popular song of the war period.
1. 12. *The Mills Brothers* : popular music-hall artists of the day.
- P. 210, l. 15. *A Caesarean* : an operation for the birth of a child, so called because Julius Caesar is supposed to have been born by this method.



## EXERCISES

### *A Night Ride*

1. Write an account of the career and character of Three-Fingered Jack.
2. Tell how W. H. Davies came to lose his leg.
3. What impression of Davies' character do you gain from this extract?

### *The Death of an Old Dog*

1. Give an account of the events which produced a fear of death in the mind of Hudson when he was a child of six.
2. On pages 17-18 Hudson describes his early conception of God. Can you give a description of how you thought of God in your childhood days?
3. What are the main characteristics of Hudson's writing that strikes you in this extract?
4. What do you learn about Hudson's own character and personality? (Base your answer on what the writer actually states and what you infer from your reading of the passage.)

### *An Escape from the Boers*

1. Give an account of Winston Churchill's escape from the prison camp and his journey to the Transvaal Colliery.
2. Tell how the writer was smuggled out of the coal-mine and across the border.
3. Write a paragraph about each of the following: John Howard, Mr. Dewsnap, Mac, Mr. Burgener.
4. Compose an imaginary account of the meeting and conversation between Mr. Howard and the Field Cornet referred to on page 46.

### *War in the Air*

1. Tell, in your own words, the story of Bodie's "invention" and what came of it.
2. Compile a list of the ironic touches to be found in this passage and say what you think is the effect produced by each one.
3. "Science, in the pursuit of knowledge [is] being exploited by a world without standards or scruples" (p. 64). Develop this theme in the form of an essay.
4. "Nature is exceedingly wasteful," declares Cecil Lewis in his concluding sentence. Write an essay in support or in refutation of this assertion.

## EXERCISES

5. "World state, world currency, world language" (p. 66). What is to be said for and against an international language? If one was adopted should it be one of the existing national languages, an artificial one such as Esperanto, or some simplified one like Basic English? Do you think it would help to promote world peace? Consider these questions in an essay.

### *Seven Years' Hard*

1. Give an account of the difficulties Kipling had to encounter during his first few years as a journalist.
2. Tell in your own words the story of the various attempts that were made to bribe Kipling.
3. What indications of the writer's opinions upon political and other issues of his day do we glean from this chapter in autobiography?
4. What sidelights on life and living-conditions in Lahore in Kipling's early days do we get from this passage?

### *A Walking Tour*

1. Write an essay in support or refutation of Sir John Squire's assertion of the superiority of the horse over the car as a means of touring the countryside.
2. Make a list of the phrases or references in this passage which reveal the writer's sense of humour.
3. On page 83 the writer comments on the difficulty of recovering the past. Do you think his assertion is borne out by the rest of the passage?
4. Taking the incidents narrated on pages 85-90 as a model, write the story of a cycling adventure of your own.

### *A London Taxi Driver*

1. What characteristics of the style of this extract strike you, as compared with that of, say, "A Night Ride" or "The Hireling"? Can you suggest any reason for these differences?
2. On page 105 the writer speaks of his lack of courage to admit ignorance. Write a short essay on this theme.
3. Write a paragraph on each of the following: a looker-out, a butter-boy, eccentric passengers, cabmen and the police, inspecting a taxi.

### *Divine Worship*

1. Write character sketches of the author's father and mother as they are presented in this passage.
2. Contrast the modern Sunday with the Sunday of fifty years ago as depicted by R. H. Mottram.

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3. Describe a service in a village church (or chapel) which you have attended.

### *A Kentish Boyhood*

1. Re-read pages 119-120, then write a short account, from your own experience, of learning to ride a bicycle *or* learning to swim, *or* of some escapade you have had similar to that of the Sassoon brothers with the Bath chair.

2. In a brief essay state which qualities of this passage appeal to you and which do not. Do you feel that you would like to read more of the book from which it is taken? Why?

3. Write an account, from the point of view of a spectator, of a country cricket match or some similar function (pp. 132-133).

### *Economies and Charities*

1. What characteristics of the life at Wilton Rectory strike you as strange, judged by modern standards?

2. What is to be said in favour of the system of "charity" described by the author in this passage, and what against it, as compared with our present-day system of social services?

3. Do you think you would care to live in a small town of the kind described by Edith Olivier? Give your reasons.

4. What characteristics of (a) the middle class, (b) the poor are brought out in this sketch of Wilton forty years ago?

5. Write an appreciation (or criticism) of this extract, pointing out what qualities of it appeal to you and what you dislike about it.

### *A Father's Funeral*

1. What impression of Dublin life at the end of the last century do we gain from this extract?

2. What effect do you think Sean O'Casey is seeking to produce upon his readers? Show how this effect is enhanced by the employment of contrast.

3. "It is humorous, valiant, sardonic and free-spoken." So wrote a reviewer of the book from which this extract is taken. Justify this description as applied to the present chapter.

4. In what respects do the methods of narration and description adopted in this extract differ from those of the more conventional autobiography? What are the advantages of these departures from the more orthodox methods?

### *Country Memories*

1. "Poverty is no excuse for ugliness." Develop this theme in a short essay, giving your own views on the matter.

## EXERCISES

2. What does the writer of this passage declare were, in her opinion, the blessings that came to the villagers of Sussex from the isolation of the lives they lived? How far do you agree? Is there anything to be said on the other side?

3. Compare this extract with the earlier one entitled "Economies and Charities." What have the two in common and in what respects do they differ?

### *The Hireling*

1. Give an account, in your own words, of how the author spent his Sundays at Hill-Top Farm.

2. Draw a pen-portrait of the mistress of Hill-Top Farm.

3. What is the effect of the employment of dialect in this extract? Do you care for it? Give reasons for your answer.

4. How far do you think that Fred Kitchen's account of the life of a farm lad about forty-five or fifty years ago would still be true to-day, and how far have things changed?

### *Life in a Hospital Ward*

1. What is your impression of the nurses at Redwood Hospital?

2. Taking the account of the concert at the aerodrome (p. 206) as a model, write an account of a concert, an entertainment or some similar function which you have attended.

3. "A woman's life is usually as untidy as her desk." Express your opinions upon this assertion of Monica Dickens.

### *General Questions*

1. Which of the extracts in this collection appeals to you most and which least? Give reasons for your opinion.

2. What qualities would you expect to find in a good autobiography?

3. Write the story of your own life.

4. What impression of English middle-class life in the later years of the last century do you get from the extracts contained in this book?

5. Which of the extracts do you prefer because of (a) the narrative interest? (b) the descriptive interest? In each case give an account of the subject-matter of the extract you select.

6. Make a list of any other interesting autobiographies that you have read, adding a few lines of comment on each.



